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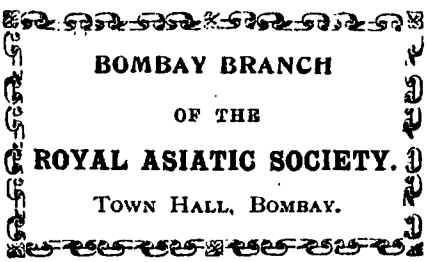

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THE NIGHT SIDE OF LONDON

A PICCADILLY LADY.

(From an Oil Painting by Tom Browne.)

THE NIGHT SIDE OF LONDON

BY

ROBERT MACHRAY

AUTHOR OF 'THE VISION SPLENDID,' 'SIR HECTOR,' ETC.

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PREFACE

THIS book is a record of Things Seen in London by night in the first two years of the twentieth century —a record made by pen and pencil. The Artist and the Author worked together, visiting the places described, and seeing the scenes herein set forth; the volume is therefore the result of what may be called their common observation.

This book is not by way of being a complete record of the Night Side of London, though it is perhaps as complete as there is any object in making it. Two or three of the more familiar phases of London by night have not been reproduced or touched upon; there is nothing, for instance, said about St. Martin's le Grand at midnight, or about a newspaper-office at two or three o'clock in the morning, or about the Chinese opium-dens in the East End. Nor is there a chapter on the River by Night; application was made to the Commissioner of Police for permission to accompany one of the river police-boats on its 'rounds,' but it was refused. And for obvious reasons nothing is said about the worst and most devilish features of the

Night Side of London. For those who wish to become acquainted with these hideous things, are there not guides to be found lurking near the entrances of some of the great hotels of London—just as is the case in Paris?

More than thirty years have passed since the publication of the last edition of a book which bore the same title as this—'The Night Side of London.' It ran through several editions, and that in spite of the fact that it had no illustrations; this bore witness to the widespread interest taken in the subject. At the time of the publication of the former 'Night Side of London,' the town presented certain aspects of night-life which have since passed away, but which undoubtedly were of unusual interest to those keenly observant of the human tragi-comedy. Thirty years ago or so the 'Argyle Rooms,' 'Cremorne,' and the 'Casino' still flourished, as did the 'Cave of Harmony' and 'Caldwell's.' Since these days there has been a considerable change, at all events on the surface, in the night-life of London. This has been brought about by various influences—principally, by the much greater activity and efficiency of the police, urged on by public opinion.

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THE NIGHT SIDE OF LONDON

CHAPTER I

PICCADILLY CIRCUS, 11 P.M.—1 A.M.

'"Put me down at the Piccadilly end of Regent Street," said the lady of the feathers.'—*Flames*, by R. S. Hichens.

PICCADILLY!

Why Piccadilly, and not something else—some other name?

It is hardly possible to imagine any appellation less characteristically English than Piccadilly, yet it is known all over the English world; indeed, like 'damn' and some other things that won't wash clothes, it may be said to be a household word. The famous circus and street by any other name might have just as special an aroma, as exotic a bouquet, as they undoubtedly possess (particularly at certain hours), but somehow the foreign-sounding tag appears to have an appropriateness of its own; it is as if there were some eternal fitness about it. Still this does not quite answer the question, Why Piccadilly?

Why Piccadilly?

The query has bothered many of the good people who are interested in this kind of conundrum.

The correct answer, perhaps because of its odious obviousness, does not seem to have occurred to anybody: Piccadilly of course gets its name from the fact that it is the Place of Peccadilloes, the Promenade of the Little Sinners—to put the matter politely and delicately, as a fashionable clergyman might, waving the while his gloved hands in dainty deprecation. Older writers solemnly debated whether the name were derived from *peccadilla*, the Elizabethan ruff for the neck, or from 'Peccadilla Hall,' a house formerly standing in the neighbourhood. Sir John Suckling brings us nearer the mark when he alludes to the Peccadillo Bowling Green. Blount, in his book which has the endearing title of *Glossographia*, tells us that Piccadilly got its name from the *pickadill*, which was a band worn round the bottom of a lady's skirt. Once, says he in his chatty way, there was a famous ordinary near St. James's called Pickadilly, and he declares that it 'took denomination because it was the outmost or skirt-house of the suburbs'! Skirt-house—the phrase is deliciously quaint and suggestive; it seems strangely appropriate, even prophetic, for assuredly a skirt-house of sorts Piccadilly still remains.

The 'Skirt-house.'

To us of these twentieth-century times it is almost incredible that Piccadilly 'near St. James's' should ever have been the western boundary of London. The middle classes, who mostly inhabit the suburbs in these days—each man, so to speak, in a neat little

skirt-house of his own—live miles and miles out of earshot of the bells of St. James's, although of a fine summer's afternoon you will see representatives of them in shoals, and for the most part in skirts, drinking tea in the shops at the Circus end of Piccadilly. Then, for a couple of hours, say from four to six, Piccadilly is as redolent of the ordinary square-toed British well-to-do-ness as any place you like to mention—is as obtrusively respectable as a Sunday morning congregation in a small Scotch town. During the other hours of daylight Piccadilly is fashionable, aristocratic, autocratic; it is one of the great streets of the world—perhaps, in a sense, its greatest.

Piccadilly by day.

But it is not these aspects of it that the Man From Up There wants to see; he has come, he tells you with engaging frankness, to see the Show 'after the theatres come out,' when the Circus, and the parts 'contagious' thereunto, become the humming centre of 'things.' ('Things' is a trifle vague, but no doubt the subject is best draped that way.) A humming centre truly enough Piccadilly Circus is from eleven to one at night—it is the centre of the Night Side of London. There is room for uncertainty as to what is the centre of London by day. Mr. Joel Solomons thinks he has good reason for saying it is to be found in his own Tom Tiddler's

MAN FROM UP THERE.

Ground, which he locates not far from Draper's Gardens. The Honourable Member for Muddleburgh has an idea that it is at Westminster, night or day, and as it is the only idea he has he probably cleaves to it, even as a land-crab holds on to a monkey's tail. Sam Bolton, cabman, of 74 Great Scott Street, has had it radiused into him that Charing Cross is the 'bobby's bull's-eye' of the metropolis. And so on and on and on. But at night, at the hours named, or rather between them, Piccadilly Circus and the purlieus thereof are the centre of London, nor is there any other part of the town which will care to dispute with the Circus this tragical distinction.

The night centre of London.

Piccadilly Circus and the purlieus thereof form an area with tolerably well-defined boundaries. On the east is Leicester Square, lit by ten thousand electric lamps; in the midst of the Square stands the statue of Shakespeare, on whose sculptured face wandering lights of blue, red, orange, and green, flashed from the Empire and the Alhambra, dance in a fantastic harlequinade. North-east is Shaftesbury Avenue, flanked by the whole dubious region of Soho—a district which in a sense holds more of the Night Side of London than all the rest of it put together. Further round to the north is Glasshouse Street, the very name of which is an apologue. Then Regent Street, as far as Oxford Circus on the north and Pall Mall on the south, with Piccadilly Circus itself in between.

Its boundaries.

Of course there is Piccadilly itself, say as far as Bond Street. Nor must mention be omitted of the Haymarket on the south-east. Time was when the Haymarket played a large part in the night life of the town, but that day (to be a little Irish) is past. This is what Du Maurier says of it in *The Martian*—

'Fifty years ago every night in the Haymarket there was a noisy kind of Saturnalia, in which golden youths joined hands with youths by no means golden, to fill the pockets of the keepers of night houses.' And he goes on to speak of some of the famous or infamous places of the locality, such as 'Bob Croft's,' and 'Kate Hamilton's,' and the 'Piccadilly Saloon.' In another part of this same book he narrates how 'Barty' and Robert Maurice went to the Haymarket, and 'Barty,' by his music, made five pounds 'in no time,' mostly in silver donations from unfortunate women—English, of course—who are among the softest-hearted and most generous creatures in the world.' There is a curious piece of testimony, if you like. One wonders (a trifle meanly perhaps, but quite humanly) just what it was built on.

A former centre.

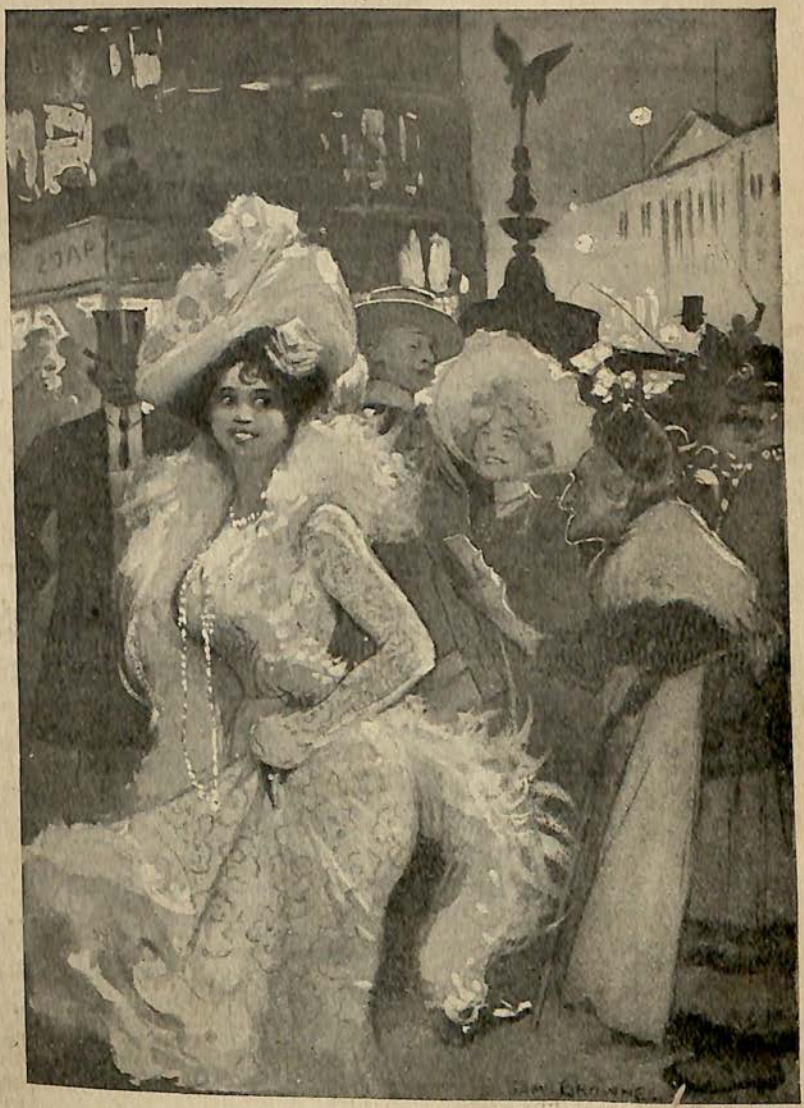
The Show, as the Man From Up There terms it, is seen at its best—that is, its worst—on a still, warm, starry night at the end of June, or the beginning of July, when the London season is at its height. The Show, in its later phases, seems never so tragical on a summer evening as it does when winter rain, or snow, or biting blasts add grim or squalid touches

to the scene. You have dined, let us suppose, well and wisely at the Carlton or Prince's, the 'Troc' or the Imperial, or some other of the numerous caravanserais, which are the descendants of the once celebrated Evans's Supper Rooms, and most of which lie well within the area tributary to the Circus. A minute or two after eleven you will 'take your station'—to employ the discreet language of the Court Circular, just as if you were a Royalty, or a Serenity, or a Transparency, the last being for obvious reasons highly recommended for immediate use—at a point of vantage.

The Show begins.

The best position, for at least the first half-hour of the Show, is the pavement between Piccadilly and Regent Street, on the north-west of the Circus opposite the Fountain. You look at the Fountain. On its steps sit strange female shapes, offering penny flowers, or haply tuppenny, to the passers-by. These female shapes, maybe, are the forms of women who once numbered themselves amongst the night-blooming plants of the town; anyway, there they are now! Time was, who knows, when they and love were well acquainted—and now 'Only a penny, sir, only a penny for a bokay!' Then your eyes will range upward to the top of the Fountain, and you will immediately observe that a great sardonic humorist of a sculptor has placed there a Cupid, armed with bow and arrow. The little god is poised on eager tiptoe in act to

The Fountain.



PICCADILLY CIRCUS—MIDNIGHT.

launch his sharp-edged dart. As the night advances you will not fail to appreciate more and more the horrid humour of that bronze figure, that pagan parable of the Circus. Few people care for such pointed satire as this, and there is something to be said for those who maintain that the Cupid should disappear, and be replaced by the Giddy Goat or some other more appropriate symbol.

For a few minutes the Circus is rather quiet. A 'bus now and again rumbles up, and interposes itself between you and the Fountain, hiding that mocking image. A girl of the night, on her prowl for prey, casts a keen glance at you, and flits silently past like a bat. Behind you—you can see her with the tail of your eye—pauses a Painted Lady, picture-hatted, black-haired, belladonna'd, rouged, over-dressed, but not more so than many a Great Lady. She makes a true picture of the town, of one aspect of the Night Side of London, as she stands with her back to the down-drawn, dull-red blinds of the shop window in the rear. A blind beggar now breaks in upon you with a hoarse, indistinct cry, that sounds like many curses compressed into one, while his iron-shod staff strikes hard and sharp on the pavement within an ace of your toes. Overture to the Show. A 'gentleman of (off) colour'—a 'buck nigger' an American would call him—goes by, a gratified smirk on his oily, thick-lipped face, and on his arm a pale, lip-laughing English girl! Somehow you swear and turn away. And then a few more

minutes pass, and the Circus suddenly buzzes with life; it hums like a giant hive. Here are movement, colour, and a babel of sounds! Till you get used to it, the effect is somewhat stunning. But now the overture is finished, and the curtain is rung up.

It is a scene that stirs the fancy, that touches the imagination. As the theatres and music-halls of London empty themselves into the streets, the Circus is full of the flashing and twinkling of the multitudinous lights of hurrying hansoms, of many carriages speeding homeward to supper, of streams of people, men and women, mostly in evening dress, walking along, smiling and jesting, and talking of what they have been to see. You behold policemen wrestling, and not unsuccessfully, with the traffic in the midst of the tumult. You catch charming glimpses in the softening electric light of sylph-like forms, pink-flushed happy faces, snowy shoulders half-hidden in lace or chiffon, or cloaks of silk and satin. Diamonds sparkle in My Lady's hair; her light laughter ripples over to you, and you smile responsive; a faint fragrance perfumes the wandering air, and the vision sweeps past you, on outside your radius. And there are many such visions, each with its own story, its own revelation—but with these we have nothing to do, further than to say that they are all part of this pageant of the night, or, if you like the notion better, it is a scene out of high comedy, infinitely allusive and suggestive, nor altogether lacking in

The curtain goes up.

the veritable substance of romance. And for ten minutes, or a quarter of an hour, it is as if all the world and his wife and his daughters, his sisters and his cousins and his aunts, drove past you.

'An almighty heap of fast freight there,' says, with strident laugh, a man from the wild and woolly West, who stands on the kerb near you, and who puts tons of emphasis on the word *fast*. But he is wrong—that is, mostly wrong. Doubtless the Other Man's Wife (to say nothing of his Mistress) has some part in the moving Show, but, speaking generally, nearly all of those you have seen are entered for the safe, if not particularly exciting, 'flat-race' event known as the Family Plate. As you gently insinuate this, or words to the like effect, into the disappointed ear of the dry-goods merchant from Julienne City, who is on the outlook for 'something saucy,' you note that the racing tide of life at length reaches the slack; the crowd begins to thin; the jar and rattle of the 'buses once more predominate, save when a noisome motor dashes by with hideous roar, or when the blind beggar aforesaid, starting on a fresh round of imprecation, again makes violent jabs at your boots.

'Fast freight.'

The curtain comes down, and you naturally think of refreshment. You stroll across the Circus to a 'Lounge,' walk up a flight of stairs, take a seat, and call for a lemon squash. A lemon squash gives you away, as it were, and several young ladies sitting

about the room, who had watched your entrance with curiosity, now cease to regard you with any interest whatsoever. You are not worthy of their powder and paint. You gaze on them and their male companions—though it is well to be careful how you do it. The women, you cannot fail to see, are young women of the town having drinks (mostly whiskies and sodas) with young men who are bent on seeing 'life'; the women smile on the men, and smile on each other; in some sort they are all evidently having a good time. The scene on the whole is gay and bright—there is nothing on the surface that is squalid or badly out of repair. All is respectable—within the meaning of the Act, as you might say. You notice this, and then you remember to have seen a colossal chucker-out at the door, and you ask what is he doing in this galley? Go to! (Mem. It is better to go two, or even three, in the Circus than go alone.)

The 'Lounge.'

Tiring of the 'Lounge,' you emerge into the Circus again. And now you take the rest of the Show in a series of tableaux, and you begin with a café, the name of which, so far as the sound of it is concerned, recalls the pleasing legend of the Man who Broke the Bank at Monte Carlo. Just outside its vestibule—that giving on the Circus—you will see a row of men (most of them foreigners) staring with bulging gooseberry eyes at the French demoiselles, whose main camping-ground is the Colonnade of Regent Street; the same men, or

Tableau No. 1.

their doubles, seem to stand there every evening, though this can scarcely be the case—the wonder is they don't catch something and 'quit.' Within the café, as you enter, is a picturesque (literally pictur-

A GAY LITTLE JAP (p. 14).

esque) little shop, where of foreign newspapers you may have 'what you please, m'sieu!' Still further within, you may have what you please; you may call for what you like—if you have the price. You quickly see that though the whole atmosphere of the place is foreign, yet the brutal custom of exacting payment

for everything you receive is rigidly insisted on with true British bull-dog pertinacity. Having mastered this stubborn fact, you perhaps descend into the grill-room, where by way of whetting your appetite you may perchance see a gay little Jap (four foot six) following two pavement-ladies (each five foot eight) down to supper. At the same time you will notice, if your taste lies that way, the wall decorations of the place; they are well done.

Having exhausted the attractions of this café, you may now step across the road into Glasshouse Street, and enter another café, which rejoices in a Latin name, and which is even more determinedly foreign than the one you have just left. Here, you will unquestionably imagine, you have transported yourself into a German beer-garden.

Tableau No. 2.

The majority of its frequenters, you will see, appear to hail from the Vaterland, and you note that their glasses, like their beverages, have been made in Germany. Here there are not many women, but such as are are not English; indeed, by this time you understand that the night centre of London is cosmopolitan. Before you leave this café you must not fail to look at the mural paintings and other pictures which adorn the room—two of them at least are far above the average.

From Glasshouse Street you pass into Regent Street, and walking down its east side towards the Colonnade you may halt, and take a peep into more cafés and restaurants. If they are well filled, and

you keep your eyes wide open, you may add several points even to the liberal education which you are already getting. In the Colonnade itself you will encounter the peripatetic foreign colony of ladies who make this their rendezvous, and turn it into what Mr. Hichens calls, justly enough, a 'sordid boulevard.' The French spoken in this quarter, he tells us, is the French of Belleville, and you may take his word for it, and so save yourself much unnecessary trouble and expense; the acquisition of a language, it is conceivable, may be bought at too high a price. Comprenez, m'sieu? You shrug your shoulders, smile, and cross over to the other side of Regent Street. More tableaux.

You now reach the spot from which, half an hour ago, you viewed the great whirring procession of cabs and carriages coming away from the theatres; it is comparatively quiet. The rush for the last 'bus, or the dub-a-dub, dub-a-dub of a whirling hansom, may make a temporary disturbance, but the Circus, though there are still plenty of human bats about, is veiled in a discreet silence. You pause for a moment, and then you stroll up the west side of Regent Street. You have perhaps gone a hundred yards or so when a party of four or five young 'bloods,' bent on carrying out their idea of a frolic, march past you arm-in-arm, and proceed to hustle the chucker-out at the back door of 'Jimmy's'—that individual (the chucker-out, not 'Jimmy,' as the uninitiated might suppose) trying More tableaux.

to bar their entrance. You are almost caught in the rush of these young heroes, but manage to make your escape; you see, however, these daring fellows (five to one) carry all (*i.e.* the chucker-out) before them and disappear into the interior. You do not attempt to follow them; you wonder vaguely what has happened to the gallant defender of the door, but presently he turns up smiling, and you understand that the incident, if not the door, is closed. And now you leisurely go round by a side-street which will take you into Piccadilly not far from the front of 'Jimmy's.' And as you are on your way it may chance that you will espy (good old word—espy!) but a short distance from Vine Street police-station a policeman or two affably passing the time of night with some of the Daughters of the Circus. But don't mistake what this means. The London police are not bad men, and in their hearts is a good deal of pity, and sympathy too, for these poor creatures of the Half-World, the wretched and miserable outcasts of society, and, in a measure, its victims.

It is now midnight, and a church bell booms out the hour. You are back again in Piccadilly, and its northern pavement is filled with men and women, mostly women, tramping up and down; there are fewer on the other side of the street. In the middle of the thoroughfare is a long line of cabs—why so many? you ask, forgetting for a second that here is the night centre of the greatest city the world has

ever seen. You move with the crowd; you may be in it, not of it, but the mere fact that you are there subjects you to incessant solicitations; you are addressed as 'darling,' 'sweetheart'—what not? Your ears are deaf, and you take a look into 'Jimmy's'; you walk through the grill-room and pass into the dining-room, both full of people, again mostly women, who, you observe, are nearly all in evening dress, presenting a generous display of their charms. Here is the chiefest temple of the demi-monde. So long as a member of the scarlet sisterhood can put in an appearance at 'Jimmy's' she fancies she is not wholly a failure!!!! Once upon a time (as you may know if you have read Fielding or Smollett or seen the cartoons of Hogarth) the ghastly pilgrimage of the Woman of the Town was from St. James's to Drury Lane; now it is from 'Jimmy's' to Waterloo Road—to which the river by way of Waterloo Bridge is horribly, suggestively handy. Well, as you look on at 'Jimmy's,' other men, you cannot but notice, come in just as you have done, and stare, and stare, and stare. The dry-goods merchant from Julienne City, whom you have met before, asks coarsely, 'What 's in the cowshed to-night?' And you turn and flee! You feel, being honest, you are something of a hypocrite, but you get out into the street again.

More tableaux.

Now you take time to classify these night-walkers of the Circus into types. Here, strangest type of all,

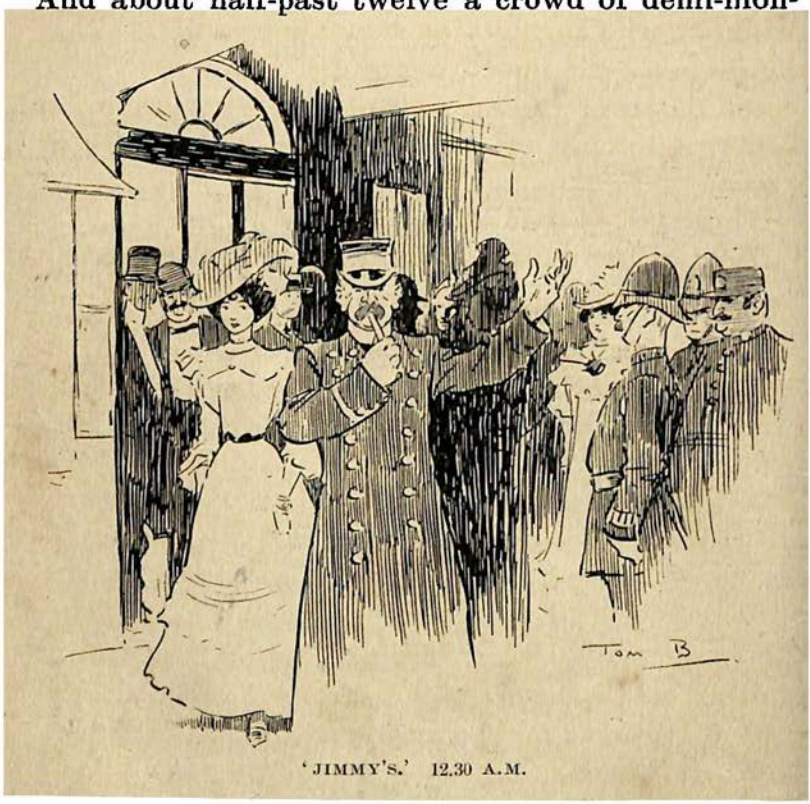
is a bent, battered, tattered figure restlessly pacing up and down the kerb; from one side of the street to the other he goes, his eyes ever fixed upon the ground. He is a Picker-up of Unconsidered Trifles, the end of a cigarette, the stubb of a cigar, a pin (if it be jewelled so much the better), anything. He makes some sort of living out of it, otherwise he would not be here. He only appears late at night, but every night—a kind of Wandering Jew you might think him from his form and dress—you can see him on his beat. Where does he come from? Whither does he go? Here is a poor, old, wretched, squalid woman selling matches; she thrusts a box into your hand, and her haggard eyes beseech you. Once, like her sisters of the Fountain, she too may have been—quite so. And the Unfortunates—the 'bedizened women of the pavements,' as Steven-

son called them, or, to quote again from Mr. Hichens, the 'wandering wisps of painted humanity that dye the London night with rouge'! On this lovely summer night they flaunt themselves in all their bravery; the majority of them, indeed, are not badly dressed, nor are all painted. Some of them are foreigners, but most of them are unmistakably English. Some have bold eyes, some have not. They seem sober—every one. But what a number of them! And all sorts and sizes, so to say; young, middle-aged; thin, stout; short, tall; Jenny 'fond of a kiss and fond of a guinea'—that ne'er-do-weel type too, but all the types seem to be here. You look into their faces, and there is a story in every face, if you could but read it. And such stories! Ah, if the stones on which they tread could speak! They can hardly be beautiful stories; they might well be terrible. And the men? They also are a mixture, nor are they all young. You can tell at a glance that not many of them are citizens of London, and not a few of them are here from sheer curiosity; they have come for the most part to see the Show.

Some figures in the Show.

About twenty minutes past twelve you notice a singular movement in the street; it sets in towards 'Jimmy's' and stops there. You go with it, and find yourself again in front of the place. And the very first thing you see is that a couple of policemen (one of them a sergeant or a superintendent) are on guard a few feet from the door. Slowly people

emerge in pairs from the restaurant, and drive away in cabs to parts of the town which have, like their inhabitants, 'lost their Sunday-school certificates.' And about half-past twelve a crowd of demi-mon-



'JIMMY'S.' 12.30 A.M.

daines and men pours forth, but by this time there are four policemen outside the door, standing there to preserve order. Four policemen! (Is there such another sight to be seen night after night in any other spot on the globe?) Hansoms dash up, and

the porter helps the Faustines, who climb into them, with as much care as if they were duchesses. Others vanish into the night, while a larger number are swallowed up in the throng of street-walkers, who for another hour or so will figure in the piteous Struggle of the Circus —the Battle of the Street, finishing up, perhaps, at some night-club, or in some other den. Some go 'home'!

Nearing the end.

There you have it all.

Heaven knows it ill becomes any of us to preach, so down with the curtain, put out the lights—

'The wise and the silly,
Old P. or Old Q., we must leave Piccadilly.'

CHAPTER II

IN THE STREETS

'Hell was a place very like London.'

LONDON by day, it will be generally conceded, presents what in its own way is the most imposing and wonderful spectacle in the world. As a 'sight' there is nothing to approach it—Paris, New York, or any other city, not excepted. But it may be questioned if London by Night, for sheer, downright impressiveness, does not seize upon, grip and hold you, as even London by Day does not. From midnight till about two o'clock in the morning the streets gradually show fewer and fewer signs of life and movement. From two o'clock to four there is a lull, a quiet, a hush, a vast enfolding, mysterious, awe-inspiring silence. It is as if the tide had gone out into the far distance, leaving the shore lonely as a maid forsaken, still as pillars of stone, but portentous, majestic, and strangely solemn withal.

The great silence.

The city sleeps!

London, taken 'by and large,' is abed and wears the nightcap. Husbands lie beside their wives—in some cases, it may perhaps be, beside the wives of

others, for this great old London is no Puritan, but is a mixture, a ferment, in which is everything good, and bad, and indifferent, and—human. In this profound stillness of the night young men and maidens dream happy dreams and see bright, beguiling visions—or ought to! Dear little children, their small distresses forgotten, their petty naughtinesses forgiven, slumber sweetly in a thousand thousand peaceful homes. But not all London sleeps. In twenty great newspaper offices, editors, leader-writers, reporters, and compositors are at work, amidst the buzz and bur-r-r of the printing-presses. At the big railway centres, both for passengers and 'goods,' there is activity, though of a quieter sort than that which prevails by day. The clubs, both high-class and no-class, are not all closed; the no-class clubs are at their best—or rather, far rather, at their worst. The thief, the burglar, the prowler, the prostitute—they, certainly, are not all asleep. Nay, you can spy them standing, watching, waiting in dark corners.

London sleeps.

After four o'clock the city begins to awake, and the great silence, which has wrapped it round like a garment, is gone—swiftly swallowed up in the roar of the streets, growing and swelling even as the day and its business grows and swells. The Night Side of London has disappeared—it is as if it had never been; but the following evening it will be repeated, and on the same gigantic scale.

What of the streets, then, from twelve to four?

Shortly after midnight all the public-houses are shut up—some of the best of them by eleven, others at twelve sharp, but most remain open till half-past twelve. With the cry 'Time, time!' the barmen turn the lights down and the people out. All sorts and conditions of men and women (particularly men in a certain condition) now gather in groups in front of the 'pubs,' in the windows of which there still burns a light or two, and from behind whose walls the chink of money being counted may be heard. If you look at these men and women you will see that they are for the most part more or less hardened citizens—criminals of both sexes; the broken man, the lost woman, the drift and wreck of humanity. A few are respectable people, but their proportion to the rest is small.

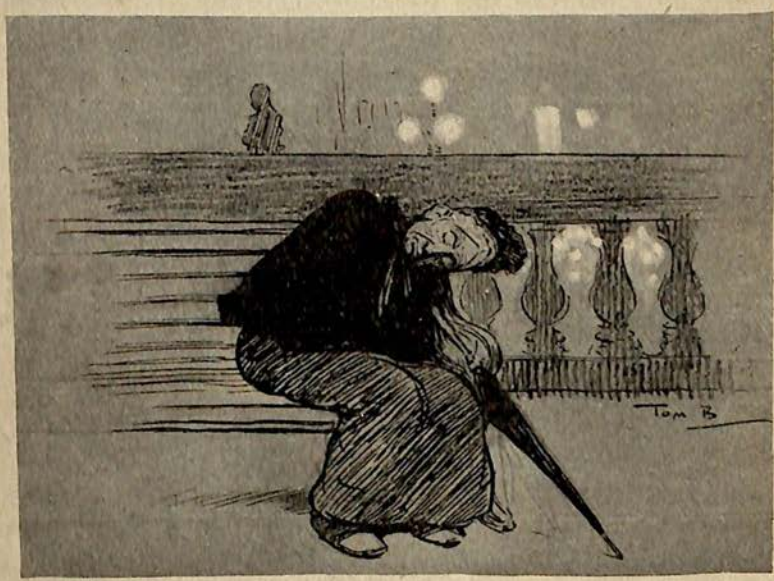
The 'pubs' close.

From twelve to two many cabs still flash past with their freightage or crawl along in search of fares. In the Circuses and other central places you can see eyes of green and red, as it were, gleaming at you from the still long ranks of hansoms. Heavy wagons also toil laboriously on to Covent Garden and the other large markets which feed this great hungry giant of a town. On the pavements men and women walk, some quickly and purposefully, for they are going home, while others loaf, lounge, or limp about—home they have none; it is a word which has no meaning for them. These are they who dwell in the Hotel of the Beautiful Star, as the French call it, or, locally

'Under the open sky.'

translated, the benches and flagstones of the Thames Embankment, Trafalgar Square, or a place of the same kind. On warm, dry nights these resting-places can hardly be termed ideal, but how about them when the rain pours down or in the cold of winter?

Here is Trafalgar Square, in the midst of which



AN OLD OLD WOMAN (p. 26).

stands the splendid column reared to the memory of Nelson. On its northern side, opposite it, is the National Gallery. This is the same thing as saying that the Square is full of associations of heroism and great deeds on the one hand, and on the other

of the delight, the beauty, the power, and the glory of Art. Now look at the row of benches, some four or five in number, placed on an elevated part of the Square, almost exactly between Nelson's Column and the National Gallery. On every one of these benches are seated people who will spend the night there, and in the light of the electric lamps you can see them pretty well. Take the first bench, and you start back, a gripping pity in your heart, for the chief figure you discern is an old old woman, and her hair is silver white. Her poor, dim, old eyes are closed, the poor old frame is bent and huddled up on the bench, the poor old feet, which have taken her here after straying through unimaginable highways and byways of life, are drawn together in an attitude of weariness past all words to describe. Near her are two men: one looks as if he might be a mechanic who has fallen on evil times, the other is a night-hawk, resting before he swoops down on such prey as may come his way. On the other benches are men, women, boys, girls—the waifs and strays of London—though this is too mild a way to put it.

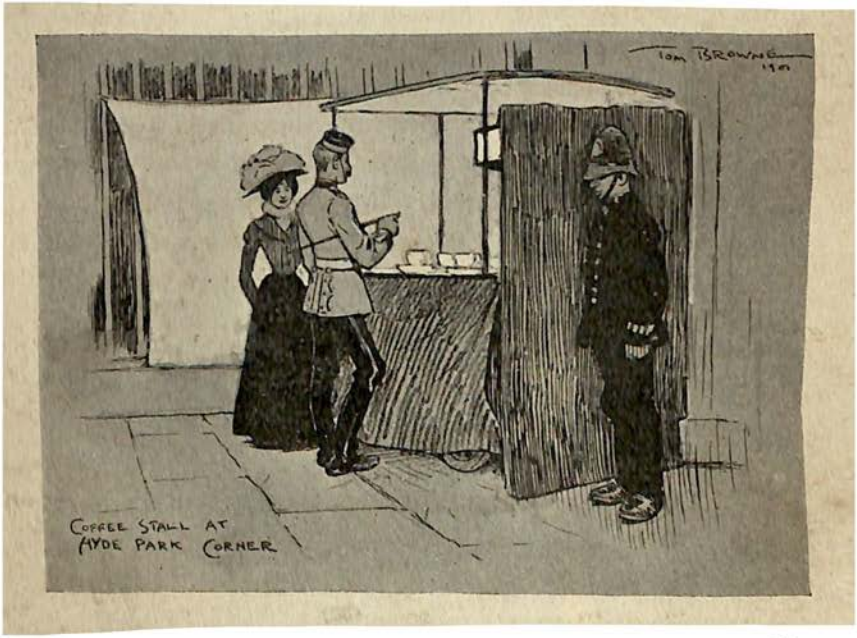
Trafalgar Square, 1 A.M.

But enough of this.

The most prominent features of the Night Side of London streets are the coffee-stalls, the hot potato-cans, and the whelk counters, which afford refreshment, and entertainment too, during the hours of dark. And if you will make a round of the streets, say on a cycle, you will be able to form a

good idea of the town—at least, from the outside, if you will proceed in a leisurely fashion, stopping now and again for a look round and a chat with a coffee-stall keeper or other provider for the Children of the Night. Suppose you select a route. Start from Hyde Park Corner

Hyde Park Corner.

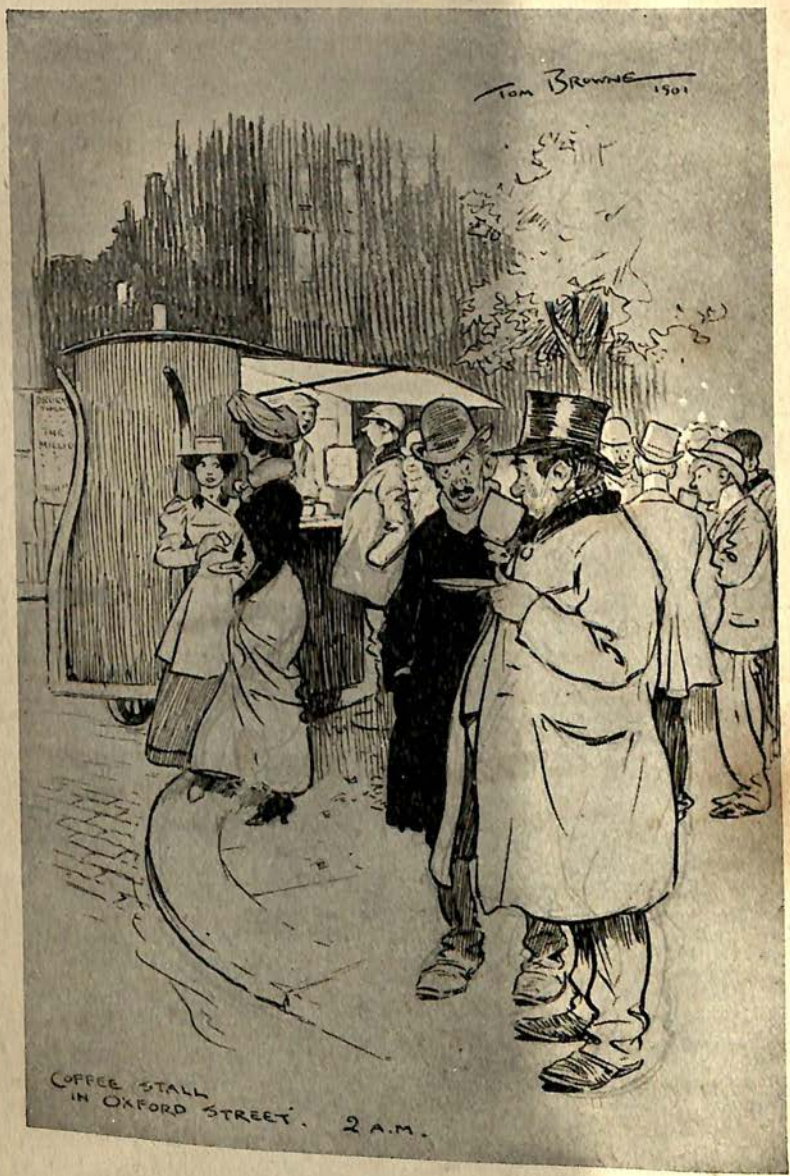


about midnight, but before you set off have a talk and a cup of coffee at the stall which you will notice hard by one of the gates. Let us say that two policemen, evidently on the best of terms with each other and the coffee-stall man, are within a few feet of you, and you can hear what they are saying. One of them has just had an adventure with a

refractory individual. 'E didn't know wot 'e wanted —didn't nohow—'cept he wanted a row—'e wos jes' spoilin' fur a fight—'e didn't mind 'oo it was with, or wot it wur fur. 'E jes' wanted trouble—'e wur out lookin' fur it, 'e wur. 'E wurn't goin' to move on, not 'e. Wy should 'e? An' 'e gave me some more o' 'is lip. But I moved 'im on!' And the two constables laugh and chuckle. While you drink your cup of coffee a guardsman comes up—why so late? you wonder; and then another man, who looks like an ex-guardsman, and has come to revisit his old familiar haunts, joins him. 'Packet o' woodbines, George,' says the last-comer. ''Ave a cup o' corfe, Bill?' 'I'll tike a piece o' kike, if you like, Tom.' 'Yes, a piece o' kike, George.' 'There!' 'Wot's up?' 'I ain't got no kike—sold out early; there ain't none left! Been awful busy right along!' 'Yes?' 'All the kike, s'elp me, went 'arf an hour ago!'

And now you do make a start on your round, which, let us say, to-night will be something like this—

From Hyde Park Corner you run along Piccadilly to the Circus—you have already seen such sights as are to be viewed in this famous part of the town, so you do not linger there. You move up Regent Street to Oxford Circus, and here you will see a scene not very dissimilar to that of the Circus at the other end, though it is on a decidedly smaller scale. You will probably also observe that the


TOM BROWNE 1901
COFFEE STALL
IN OXFORD STREET. 2 A.M.

Women of the Town who frequent the spot are of a lower type. Suppose you now cycle along Oxford Street, past Tottenham Court Road, along New Oxford Street, say as far as the corner where is Mudie's well-known library. Almost opposite the last-named is a coffee-stall (p. 29), and about it there are some fifteen or twenty persons. It is worth your while to dismount and add yourself to their number for a few minutes. It is a typical coffee-stall, and the crowd about it is typical too. There is something Parisian about the scene, but this is because there are some trees in the background, which the darkness appears to multiply, and to give the place something of the character of the Boulevards. Near by is a cabstand, and the cabbies patronise the stall, which is kept by a bright young fellow who has a pleasant, cheery, smiling way with him. His customers chaff him, and he pays them back in their own coin, adding sufficient interest the while. He seems to know most of his customers pretty well, addressing the majority of them by their Christian names — 'Jim,' 'Molly,' 'Sally,' 'Kate,' 'Peter,' and so on.

A typical coffee-stall.

The patrons of the coffee-stall are 'warious.' At the side next the street stand two young women, both well-dressed, one of them almost elegantly. She is the better looking of the two, and you naturally take a good look at her first of all. You see she is rather pretty, and has once been prettier. You know what she is, or if you don't, you do not

need to be told. She has been walking the streets for the past two or three hours, and what she would call 'business' has been bad. So she is going home alone—which is not what she had intended! The young lady to whom she talks has met with a similar experience, and the two exchange their dreary confidences. They speak in a low tone, however, and you cannot hear what they say. They soon stop talking altogether to listen to the chaff passing between the coffee-stall keeper and a 'cabby' who has just driven up. Next to the two women there are lounging on the kerb four or five young men—they are hardly men, for they are really lads—whose ages run from eighteen to twenty-three, or thereabouts. They have either had their coffee or they are not 'taking any.' Perhaps they have not the price. They stand silently by, smoking cigarettes, whose odour is not exactly that of the Spicy Isles. They keep one eye, so to speak, on the two young women, and with the other they take in the rest of the crowd. One wonders why in the world they are not in bed. From their appearance they belong to a class which should be 'respectable.' It may be that they are young graduates in the school of crime—there is declared to be an intimate connection in these days, or is it nights? between coffee-stalls and crime—but, if so, the lads cannot be said to have the hardened, battered aspect which is generally considered to belong to the habitual criminal. Perhaps they are

The same continued.

only beginners, and, certainly, it would be better for them, and for everybody, if they were in bed. For almost cheek by jowl with them you see two other young fellows, and what they are is written large upon them. They are 'Hooligans.' And the 'Hooligans' are a curse, and a pest, and an altogether damnable feature of London life at the present time. The evenings and the nights are of course fullest of opportunities for them, and you may begin to fear, as you see more of them at other coffee-stalls in the course of your ride, that they are a numerous class. At least, you can safely surmise that it is no good thing for those respectable-looking young lads to be within close touch of their society. The 'Hooligans' at the stall absorb into their systems a couple of hard-boiled eggs, eat a piece of cake, and drink a cup of coffee each, cursing very audibly as they consume the food. The meal finished, they light cigarettes. look round as if they were speculating whether there was any opening for them in the crowd, and, seeing none, they slouch away into the darkness.

'Hooligans.'

A little bit back from the stall are a couple—a man and a woman, both somewhat intoxicated, the woman more so than the man. Indeed, she is inclined to be maudlin and to babble—but not 'o' green fields.' The man is trying to reason with her, perhaps to get her to go home, but she maintains she 'won't go home till mornin'.' The tableau they present is half comical, half disgusting. The lady

always has the last word in each argument, and when you leave you observe that she persists in the statement of her continued determination not to move from the spot. You think it altogether likely that she will *not* go home till morning. Leaning on the counter of the stall, their cups in front of them, are a pair of Jarvies, otherwise cab-drivers. 'Got one o' them stone bullets o' yours?' asks cabby number one of the stall-keeper. 'What do you mean with your stone bullets?' retorts the keeper. 'Ain't got no stone bullets here. Don't keep 'em. What d'ye want 'em for? to ball up yer 'oss's feet?' 'Wot you givin' us? Ain't 'e saucy, Bill?' says he facetiously, turning to his pal. 'Wy, if those heggs o' 'is ain't stone bullets, strike me dead. 'Ere, give us a couple o' 'ard-boiled, and look lively. We ain't goin' to spend the bloomin' night 'ere. So, go along!' ''Ave you got such a thing as a "doorstep"? If so, I can do with a 'ole staircase o'

TRYING TO REASON WITH HER (p. 33).

'Hard-boiled.'

'em,' cried the other cabby. 'You ain't 'ungry, are yer, Mike?' ''Ungry ain't the word.' Presently the cabbies are served, and retire munching into the background.

Here, a few paces from the stall is a drinking-fountain, and about it is a group of three or four workmen—as you can tell from the way in which they are dressed. They have come to the stall strictly on business, that is, for much-needed refreshment. Perhaps, of all those you see here, they have the most legitimate claim on the coffee-stall. They are night workers, and have every right to have their wants satisfied. While you are looking at them two new arrivals come upon the scene, a man and a woman—these night birds, you will perceive, go about most frequently in pairs. The man's face is red, pimply, unwholesome, suggestive as it can be of an ardent devotion to Bacchus, but, on the other hand, his companion is a quiet, well-dressed, well-behaved, decent-looking person. Their story seems to be simple. If one reads it aright, it is a case of the woman trying hard to reform a drunken husband. Still, the man's air is jaunty; it is the woman's which is humble and depressed. It is she, however, who goes up to the stall, and buys coffee for two and biscuits. And now a woman, who is almost crazy with drink, and who reels out the most frightful blasphemies, comes shuffling and staggering to the stall. A policeman, who has all the time been watching the group

Night birds.

from across the road, makes a move forward, and then, thinking better of it, stands still, waiting to see what will happen. But nothing happens. The woman goes off again into the night, leaving behind her, as it were, a lurid trail of evil-sounding words.

All this you have seen in ten minutes or a quarter of an hour. It may be that you have seen enough, but in any case you must ere this have finished your coffee. So you again mount your wheel, and ride off on your expedition. You now travel a short way back until you arrive at the corner of Tottenham Court Road, and as you pass along this thoroughfare you will see several coffee-stalls and at least one whelk-counter and a peripatetic hot-potato-can man. At none of the coffee-stalls do you remark a considerable number of people; most of them have at best only two or three customers. The purveyor of whelks is not patronised at all. The potato-can man is also solitary, but his time will come in the cold early hours of the dawning day. Some other night the case may be quite different, but to-night the street is rather empty. So you go on your way, and in another minute or two you are in Euston Road, a street which has about as malodorous a reputation as any in London, particularly with regard to its Night Side. Yet a short distance from Euston Station you come upon as handsome a coffee-stall as any you will see in your journey, and you jump off and take a good look at it. The first thing you will notice is that in front of it is a carpet formed of broken egg-

shells, and you perhaps begin your conversation with the keeper by referring to this circumstance. You compliment him on the fine appearance of his place of business—you observe that the stall is freshly painted and well appointed. On one side of it, in large letters, is the legend 'Al Fresco.' He tells you that his stall cost a hundred pounds, and it is quite evident that he is proud of it. He tells you also that this is a quiet time of the night with him, and that he won't be really busy again until about four o'clock. He is disposed to chat, and he maintains that he is all in favour of the crusade against coffee-stalls as they are at present. 'They should be licensed,' says he, 'and then we'd hear no more about the connection between coffee-stalls and crime. I think Mr. John Burns, M.P. for Battersea, is quite right in everything he has said about these stalls. The good stalls are all on his side; it is only the bad stalls who fear him and do not agree that a change should be made. Why,' continues the man, 'you'll find half a dozen coffee-stalls within a quarter of a mile of King's Cross. There is no need for such a number. More than half of them should be shut up. And then those of us who do a straight business would feel ourselves protected.' The man glances across the street, and there you will espy in the half-darkness curious figures standing in little groups (p. 38)—they are, to put it in the least offensive way, not reputable characters—they are bad men and bad women of the lowest type.

'Al Fresco.

You get on your bicycle again, and proceed to get confirmation of the statements which you have just heard. They are true. Within the area mentioned are these half-dozen coffee-stalls, and you do not require to be told there are too many of them. You may or

may not stop at one or more of them, but if you mean to get over the ground which you intended to cover when you started out, it will be better for you to get on down Gray's Inn Road, and there you will see still more coffee-stalls.

You have perhaps made up your mind to see something of the East End, though by this time you can-

not but be aware that this coffee-stall business is a great 'industry'—in a sense; however, you wish to continue your excursion. On you go, therefore, across Holborn, and by Cheapside, into the City proper, which is now hushed and quiet even as some forgotten city of the dead. You have no doubt read of cities standing on the floor of the sea—cities with temples and theatres and palaces and splendid mansions and long aisles of magnificent streets, and everywhere in them and about them the blue-green translucent water for atmosphere, and everywhere strange shadows and shapes, moving fantastically, or motionless, more fantastic still. Such in some sort is the City at dead of night; you have seen that by day it is the roaring, raging mart of the world, but in these hours of silence it is something that seems unreal, dreamlike, ghostly, born of fable and legend like those imaginary cities that stand in the sea. You pass through it, and at Aldgate you are on the edge of the other London, the East End—cut off from the West by the City. You reach Whitechapel, and halt in the spacious Whitechapel Road; you behold more cab-stands, more coffee-stalls. If you get off at any one of the latter you will almost certainly find yourself in the midst of a scene more or less similar to that which you saw an hour or so ago in New Oxford Street. For there is a sameness about them all. Turn up to the left, and you will presently arrive in what has been called the 'murder area.'

The East End.

Here is the coffee-stall which figured not long ago in what is known as the Dorset Street case. It is quiet enough now, but at any one of these coffee-stalls a brawl may take place at any moment—it depends on circumstances, amongst them being the presence or the absence of the police. And, if your curiosity is not yet satisfied, you may visit other parts of the East End; but let us say you have had enough of it, as you wish to take a run through South London while it is yet night.

You make for London Bridge—one of the bridges of history—and in a few minutes you are in South London. The streets here, at any rate, by this time are fallen very quiet—the great silence is upon them. You may stop, though most likely you content yourself with a cursory glance as you ride along; but if you do pause at one or other of the many coffee-stalls, you will look on much the same sort of thing you have already seen—the stall, its lamp shining on a group of figures standing about its counter, and, not far away, a watchful policeman. Now, you get along through Battersea, and, crossing the River once more, find yourself, after having traversed parts of Chelsea and Belgravia, back at your starting-point. If the night has been fine the journey has not been an unpleasant one, except perhaps in such streets as are being washed by the water-cart brigade, where you may have had to negotiate shallow canals of muddy filth and liquid slime. Your trip may not have been particularly edifying

or instructive, but if you have failed to be interested you may be sure the fault lies with yourself. And now a word or two about the deeds, the dark deeds, which have been perpetrated at these coffee-stalls or in their immediate vicinity. In a letter to the *Daily Chronicle* last autumn, Mr. John Burns, the well-known Member for Battersea, particularised some facts referring to the connection there is between coffee-stalls and crime which are worth repeating. On October 30, 1900, a young man was stabbed in the back at a coffee-stall in Waterloo Road. On December 7, 1900, police-constable Thomson was *killed* at a Whitechapel coffee-stall brawl while properly discharging his duty in trying to quell a disturbance. In May, 1901, a woman, sixty-one years of age, was assaulted by two ruffians at a stall, and died from a fractured skull. In August, 1901, at Hyde Park Corner, a porter's head was cut open with a blunt instrument. 'There was a free fight, in which a number of disorderly persons of both sexes took part. The police said in evidence that "objectionable characters nightly congregated about these coffee-stalls, and frequently molested late pedestrians."' In August, 1901, there occurred a typical case at a Tottenham Court Road coffee-stall. The following account of the subsequent proceedings in the police-court may fitly close this statement of the coffee-stall aspect of the Night Side of London :—

'Coffee-stalls and Crime.'

'At the London County Sessions, Clerkenwell,

Margaret Ryan, nineteen, tailoress, was accused upon indictment with having maliciously wounded Walter Edwards, a labourer. The prosecutor's evidence was to the effect that at about one o'clock in the early morning of August 4 he was in Tottenham Court Road near a coffee-stall. He was accosted by five women, one of whom was alleged to be Ryan. They asked Edwards to treat them to cups of coffee, and, on his refusing, two of them struck him with their fists. The accused, it was said, produced a glass tumbler, and threw it at the man, striking him behind the left ear. He was then knocked down, and while on the ground was kicked by the women. At the same time some one, picking up a piece of broken glass, drew it across Edwards' throat, inflicting an injury which had to be surgically treated. The women took to their heels, and the prosecutor dropped unconscious on the footway. An alarm was raised by the bystanders, and Ryan was arrested afterwards in a house. Her defence was a plea of mistaken identity. The jury adopted this view and acquitted her.'

A typical case.

Now that public notice has been called to the coffee-stalls it must be said that the police have them much better in hand than formerly. Nor is there any doubt that the police have the whole of London much more efficiently protected at night at the present time than was the case only a few years ago. This is to be seen in the constant raiding of night clubs and in other ways. Nowhere is this

more marked perhaps than in the East End, as, for example, in Ratcliff Highway, where, at least on the surface, the scenes which used to make that street a byword and a terror may no longer be beheld. And it is thither we shall now go—to take another look at the East End. And we shall see—what we shall see.

LIBRA
OF TH
BOMB
BRANC
OF TH
ROYAL ASIATI

CHAPTER III

IN THE STREETS—*continued.* (RATCLIFF HIGHWAY)

'In the streets the tide of being how it surges, how it rolls!
God! what base ignoble faces! God! what bodies wanting souls!'

ALEXANDER SMITH.

THE now almost forgotten poet who, in a sour mood of pessimism, wrote these lines, was doubtless thinking of the meaner streets of Glasgow which were very familiar to him, but they might be applied as correctly, or incorrectly, to the poorer streets of any great city. In any case they are far too sweeping, but there is a certain amount of truth in them. To a large extent they are unfortunately descriptive enough of some of the streets of the East End of London, whether by day or night. Still, there is nothing to be seen in the East End that bears even a poor-relation likeness to the characteristic scenes that are to be witnessed every evening in Piccadilly. There once was a time when Ratcliff Highway presented in low life what the Haymarket and Piccadilly showed in high, or at least better-dressed, life. And though it is hardly correct to say that this

Ratcliff Highway.

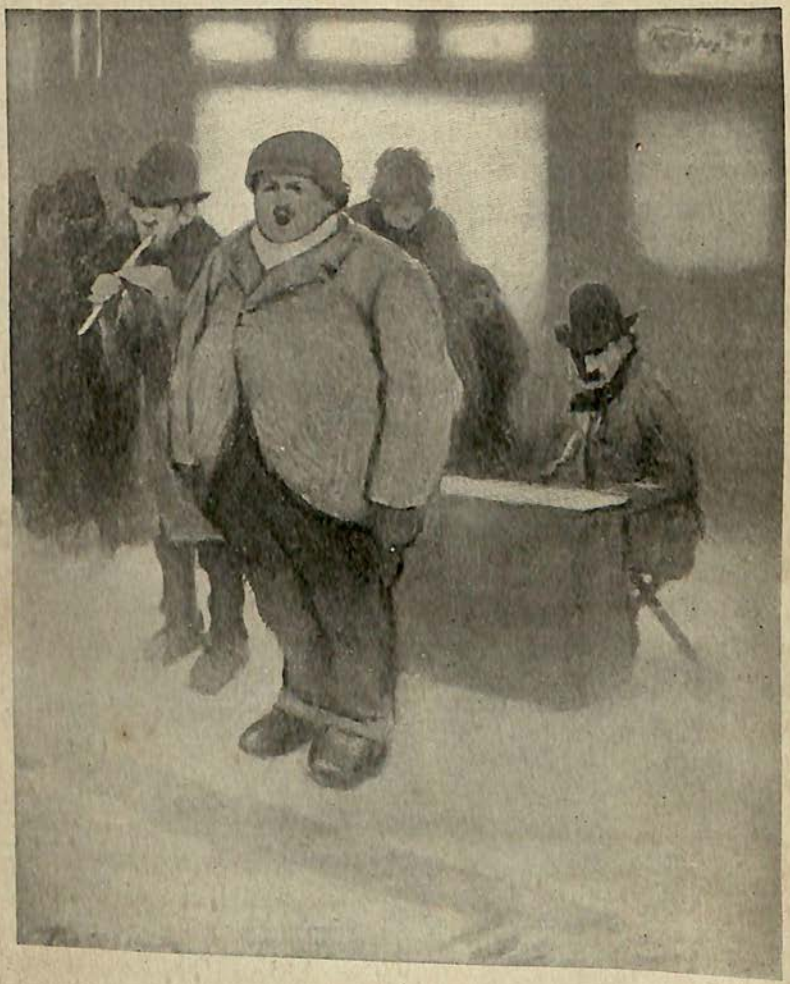
time is entirely of the past, yet in a great measure it is—that is, so far as the once famous, or infamous, Highway itself is concerned; vice of the old historic, full-flavoured, fire-ship sort has been relegated to the side streets. The Show itself is gone; it has been replaced by many side-shows, so to speak. It is perfectly possible to walk along the whole street, now called St. George Street, from East Smithfield to Shadwell, 'from Dan to Beersheba,' and find nothing particularly remarkable, but if you plunge into the back streets you will certainly see and hear, if you keep your eyes and ears open, some curious sights and sounds.

It used to be the fashion for visitors to London, especially when they were from the other side of the Atlantic, to form a party to make a tour of the East End on Saturday evening. Seated on the top of a tram or a 'bus, they would explore Whitechapel and Mile End as far as Bow, and return; next, greatly daring, they would diverge into the Commercial Road, and finally, still more greatly daring, wind up the evening's 'divarsion' by taking in Ratcliff Highway. And, sure enough, Whitechapel is a sight well worth seeing, and remembering too—the enormous crowds of people, the flaring lights on stall and barrow and the sea of upturned faces, the movement, the apparent confusion, while the noisy shoutings and bellowings of would-be sellers rend the air! And in the Commercial Road there is much the same thing. There is nothing specially vicious

about it, nothing wicked, but it is interesting to the student of human nature, and to the artistic eye, not enamoured solely of mere prettiness, is full of types that have their own fascination—it is all living, palpitating drama, mostly of a comedy character, but tragedy is never far away in the East End. Indeed, some one has called the East End the 'Everlasting Tragedy of London.' There is truth in this, but there is also exaggeration, just as there is in the poet's verse. By and by, in another chapter of this book, you will see East End London setting out for its great annual holiday when the hopping season begins, and you will also see that it manages to get no little fun and jollity out of life. Its fun is not the same kind of thing that the West End calls fun, but it is just as real, perhaps more so.

East End types.

After Whitechapel and the Commercial Road you will think Ratcliff Highway rather dark and fearfully quiet. You naturally wish to begin at the beginning, so you perhaps start from the Tower—if it is a fine night with a clear-shining moon, that pile in itself is a thing more than well worth seeing—then you go past the Mint and St. Katharine's Docks. The docks are on your right, and East Smithfield is on your left. Presently you are in St. George Street, otherwise Ratcliff Highway. The street got its new name from the church of 'St. George's in the East,' one of the great churches of London; the church is almost halfway down the



SINGING IN THE STREET.

(From an Oil Painting by Tom Browne.)

street. Other notable places are the Seamen's Mission Hall, the Seamen's Chapel, and notable also, though in a different way, is Jamrack's. Everybody has heard of Jamrack's, where you can buy any living creature you please, from elephants to humming-birds. Jamrack's! Jamrack's! —the name always sounds like that of some character out of a novel by Dickens. Well, you walk along the street: in parts it is quite deserted, in others there are small knots of people; here and there are men and women standing or sitting in front of their open doors. There is no loud talk, no shouting; the air is not darkly blue, as you perhaps half feared, half expected it would be, with strange and weird oaths and imprecations. And you may proceed as far as Limehouse without seeing or hearing anything that tickles your curiosity. Perhaps you may stop and talk to a policeman; you ask him where are the once famous features of the Highway gone, and he will tell you that he does not know where they have gone, but gone they are—thanks to him and his kind. But is it so?

The Highway.

For one thing, as you have plodded your way eastward, you have noticed one feature of the Highway, and it is a very suggestive feature, and this is the number of public-houses in the street. It almost seems as if every second or third house was a 'pub.' You have of course glanced in, and you observe that the bars of these places are well filled, and that though the appointments are not of the

most attractive description—they are not of the flaunting gin-palace order so conspicuous in some districts of the town—yet the groups appear to be enjoying themselves, and mostly in a quiet way. You notice at once that the patrons and patronesses of these resorts are all sailor folk, seamen, sailors' wives or sweethearts—all connected in some way with the life of the sea. From some of the publics you will have heard the strains of music—not exactly sweet music either. There is plenty of volume, of quantity, in the strains, but of quality not so much as might be wished. Perhaps you stop and listen; then you hear a song, sung in a way that only a sailor sings a song. And as you listen, there comes to you from afar the sound of more music; it seems rather remote; you listen intently, and you make out at last that it is being wafted down to you from somewhere up the side street at the corner of which you are standing. You, it may be wisely, but that will depend, determine to follow it up. All that you have seen so far has been a little tame; and as you anticipated something out of the ordinary, something 'spicy' or 'saucy,' you are rather glad to launch out on further adventure.

Ratcliff 'publics.'

And up this side street—there is no need to give it a name, for there is more than one of *it*—you do come on something of the kind you have been looking for, something that will remind you of what you have read or heard of the old Ratcliff Highway,

something you may see any night, if you like, though you probably would 'rather not,' in the low parts of Liverpool and Cardiff. You recall what the policeman said to you, and you know very soon that he has told you only part of the truth.

A side street.

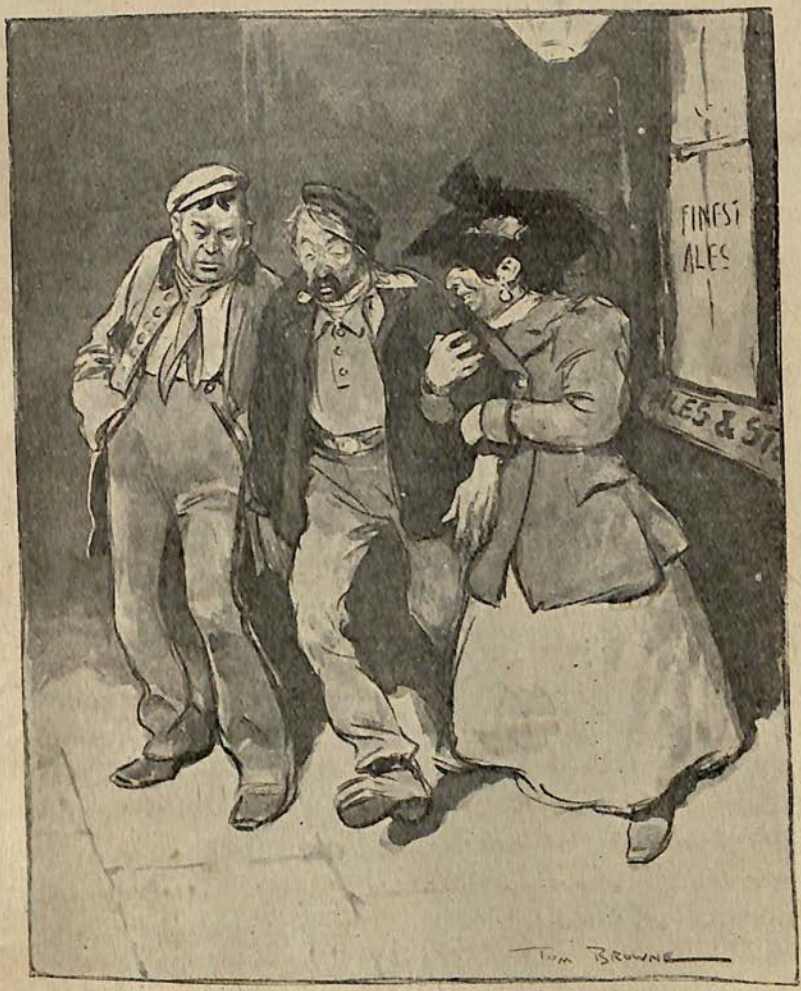
The Highway itself is changed, but all around, in these dim streets which branch off it, it still survives. Well, you see it in every great port of the world—the same thing, always the same thing. In Rotterdam, in Antwerp, in Hamburg, in New York, San Francisco, Hong Kong, Singapore—always the same thing. When 'Jack' comes ashore after a voyage, it is ten to one that he makes a straight line for the nearest drinking-den with his mates, and Jack ashore is the prey, one might almost say the natural prey, of the publican and the sinner. Crimps are the same all the world over, and so is that good-natured, big-hearted sailor-man whom we call Jack; he is soft-headed as well as soft-hearted. Nor does the breed ever change—so there is always a Ratcliff Highway, or something corresponding to it, in every port.

A Ratcliff picture!

And soon you come upon a picture, a typical picture. There it paints itself for you in front of a public-house—the public-house itself, you cannot fail to observe, being a very inferior establishment; in fact it is a low boosing ken, or not much better than one. Three figures stand outside the door and in front of the window, from which there streams forth no great amount of

light. One figure is that of a representative of the lowest class of sailorman there is under heaven, and that is the man who looks after the furnaces and fires on a steamer; he is called a stoker in the navy, a fireman in the merchant service. There is no man who sails the sea who has so bad a time as the fireman: his work brutalises him; the heat in the interior of the steamboats drives him mad; his thirst is quenchless—he goes to sea nearly always drunk—he wakes from his stupor with a raging thirst—he remains thirsty—when he gets ashore he rushes to the nearest drinking-den to quench that awful thirst of his. He is poorly paid, and what he receives on landing, at most two or three pounds, soon disappears; it melts in a few hours; usually it is stolen from him; he never really gives himself a chance, nor does any one else give him one.

He has no chance. Look at him now! He is a demoralised man, a badly demoralised sailorman. He has been drinking heavily, but he has still some glimmerings of reason, but not enough to keep him away from the den. He still feels that awful thirst, which is the tragedy of his lot, poor devil; it is not yet satisfied; he must have more liquor, even if it is the rankest and vilest stuff that he is given—it always is. But he must have more, more, more. He is not alone—this unfortunate wretch of a fireman, who is yet—yet—a human being. By his side stands a woman, a genuine Moll of Ratcliff. As you see her, you are forced to remember the woman you



A RATCLIFF PICTURE.

have seen in the caricatures of Rowlandson, for here is one of them, risen, as it were, from the dead: stout, ill-favoured, hard-featured, horribly leering, abominably coarse, hard, and filthy—she is a prostitute of the lowest class. She is making love (love!) to the fireman; she wants him to stand her a drink, but he has just enough sense left to know all that lies that way, and he refuses—that is, at first. But the woman is not without her assistant. For with her is a 'bully'—yes, a second character out of the Georgian period come to life again! Together the prostitute and the bully gradually edge the fireman into the den; they coax, they cajole, they push him dexterously along; in a minute more they are all inside. A policeman passing on the other side sees the game, and he grins to himself, and says, 'They've got him!' And they have. When they've finished with this poor Jack, he will be lying unconscious in some street far-retired from view, his money will have vanished, and, unless he is very lucky indeed, so will have most of his clothes! It's not a pretty picture, is it? But scenes of the same sort are to be witnessed in every great port of the world, and witnessed, too, every night, and not only in or about Ratcliff Highway!

'Moll' of Ratcliff.

While you have been looking on this little bit of realism, you have all the while heard the music sounding from somewhere higher up the street; it now seems a little nearer you, and you proceed in

the direction from which it comes. You draw nearer and nearer, and soon you are just in front of the 'Black Cat' or the 'Red Rat'—it doesn't really matter what we call it, but it is there right enough! The sounds come from the first floor, and if you follow a separate staircase, communicating with the street and not with the 'pub'—that is, communicating directly—you

A dance-hall.

will arrive in a fair-sized room, at one end of which is the band, discoursing the most extraordinary, unmusical music as ever was! On the floor half a dozen Jacks are turning and churning round and round and round with robustious young women in their arms; they stop turning and churning after a while, and now they line up; then at it, heel and

toe; then more turning and churning, turning and churning. The band gives forth a final, ear-splitting bray, and the dance is over. Then drinks, drinks, drinks! Gin and rum are the favourites of your sailorman and his young (more generally old) woman. Suppose you enter into conversation with one of the ladies, you will find that it runs, as naturally as rivers run to the sea, to gin or rum or both. And if you should get tired after a while, and you are pretty sure to get tired, of the dance-hall of the 'Black Cat,' why, there are others of the same sort no great distance away. And if you do not come upon one of these, then, at any rate, there are concert-halls, contagiously situated to 'pubs' of the 'Black Cat' stripe. In all of them you will see Jacks—and Jills! And 'you can't 'elp but larf,' or the whole thing might break your heart! Of course, it has its humorous side, but it has others, and these are not at all humorous. After a time you bid the chairman—there is nearly always a chairman at these functions—good-bye, and thereafter you turn back into the Highway again!

You now move westward until you come to Wells Street. Perhaps you hesitate—you think you have seen enough for one evening, but you walk up Wells Street; as you approach Cable Street you join a swarming crowd, which attracts you and draws you on. In a minute or two you are in Cable Street. It wants but half an hour of midnight, but the place is literally thronged with people, so that

you think something important is forward. You scan the faces around you, and, in a flash, you see they are not at all English-looking; in your ears are the sounds, it might well seem to you, of every language under heaven. It would puzzle you to enumerate the nationalities represented — but there are men and women and children from every European clime, from the Orient, and even from Africa here. And you may be sure that in this seething human maelstrom of races and tongues there is a seething maelstrom of human passions, from the most primitive and aboriginal to the most complex and diabolical. You take note that here the police go about in couples; it is not safe for them to go about their work singly — and there is always plenty of work for them here. You will see some of it presently. But what a world of curious interest it is! Take a sample; odd, but typical. Outside a shop is a small crowd (a denser crowd in the crowd, as it were) gazing into its solitary window. There is music, too, coming from the shop; and the music, unlike that to which you have listened with horror earlier in the evening, is sweet, soothing, dreamy, delightful. You manage to force your way into the crowd before the window, and look in. It is a shop—a poor mean shop—a shop kept by a poor man for poor men and women. It is a baker's shop, and the bread sold in it has a foreign, unfamiliar aspect in your English eyes. The shop is badly lighted by

A foreign East End street.

two or three flickering candles—tallow 'dips.' The proprietor, in trousers and shirt open at the neck, leans over a narrow counter; beside him is a woman, and behind him, to his left, is a doorway, and in it stands another woman—the first woman, perhaps, is his wife, the second his mother. On shelves are the loaves, pile on pile, quaintly shaped, but still the veritable stuff and staff of life. There are two or three customers on the other side of the counter. And just to the left of them is a man playing divine music on a zither! You wonder, is the zither-player there to draw business to the shop, or is he playing for his own and his friends' pleasure and for yours? Anyway, there he is. But what a strange scene—the baker's shop, the baker, the women, the bread, the buyers, the zither-player! And all this part of London is full of strangely coloured scenes just like this!

You move on again, though you would fain linger as the zither-player touches his strings. And now you come to the mouth of an alley. Next the street stands a sullen man, beside him two policemen; far down the alley a virago is shouting shrill abuse. The

sullen man is her 'man,' but she is going for him as hard as she can in language which leaves nothing to the imagination. He would say something in reply, but the policemen warn him that silence is the best policy, and the retort discourteous dies away upon his lips. In her special brand of vituperation the woman is a great artist, and her friends and neighbours greet all her points against her man with applause; they wait in silent enjoyment until she has made her point, and then they roar their delight whole-heartedly. The sullen man drifts away amidst their jeers, while his much-better half holds the fort in triumph. And as you look on, another man comes into the mouth of the alley. He is drunk; he lurches about; he sways uncertainly, but he halts unsteadily in the little crowd which has been listening with such gusto to the artist in abusive language. He says something indistinctly. Then he swings forward a step, and touches one of the policemen. It may be that the police-officer thinks the man wishes to hustle him, or it may be that he thinks this is the best way to treat the case, but he gives the drunken man a shove, a push, and down goes the drunken man flat on his back. As he falls on the flagstones you can hear the thud and the crash as his shoulders, and then his head, strike the stones. They are sickening sounds. He does not get up—does not attempt to move. People bend over him, and look into his face. The man is drunk-stupid,

An East End street scene.

DOWN.
GOES. THE.
DRUNKEN. MAN.
FLAT. ON. HIS. BACK.

but still he lies there—he might be dead; and now the policeman, alarmed that his push may have very serious if not fatal results, bends down, and with the help of his mate raises the man, whose wits slowly come back to him after a fashion. They shake him about like a bottle—as if the process encouraged the speedier return of his wits—they clap his hat on his bleeding head, and send him off, not looking or caring much where he goes. A friend takes him by the hand, and leads him away. You lose sight of him, and you are not sorry. And now you have had quite enough of it; you walk to the nearest station or cabstand, and home you go.

CHAPTER IV

'IN SOCIETY'

'There are many grand dames whose easy virtue fits them like a silk stocking.'—DU MAURIER.

THE Night Side of London 'high life' is on the surface extremely kaleidoscopic, but beneath the surface and in all essentials it differs little from what the Night Side of high life has been since high life began. Its main feature is, as it has always been, and always will be, Mr. H. G. Wells's *Anticipations* to the contrary notwithstanding, the Pursuit of Pleasure in an everlasting Vanity Fair. It is a merry-go-round, whose merriness quickly or slowly, according to the toughness of one's physical and moral digestion, passes into monotony. Not that Society is more decadent now than at any former time. Indeed, in some respects Society prides itself on being better than it used to be. Thus, if it gambles as much as ever, it certainly does not drink to that excess which was its habit in former days. Then London Society is so much larger than it was even a generation or two ago—it has grown gross with millionaires and other Men with Money. There are a great many sets in Society—

'Society.'

there is even an innermost set of social Olympians—but the only people who are really 'in it' are the people with the big bags of shekels. Blue blood or new blood matters not at all—rich blood is the thing.

The pursuit of pleasure, like death, claims all seasons for its own, but London has ear-marked, so to say, two of them. There is the season proper, *the* season, which begins after Easter and lasts till well into July or the beginning of August. Then there is the 'little season' in October and November, after the cream of the shooting has been skimmed and before the hunting has commenced. As an institution the 'little season' is growing in popularity, but it does not begin to compare with the other. All the greater social functions take place during the course of the latter. Royalty is in town, and this is a prime factor. *The* season is distinguished by 'Levees' and 'Drawing-Rooms' at the Palace—also by balls, garden-parties, and concerts there. In this year, 1902, the day Drawing-Rooms have been abandoned, and evening Courts have taken their place; thus a novel feature of the Night Side of London has been introduced. People whose state is little less than royal are also in town. If the Duchess of Blankshire is going to give a ball, you may be sure it will come off about the end of May or some time in June; but it must be remembered 1902 is an exceptional year—the year of the Coronation. Also, of course, Parliament is in

The 'seasons.'

session during this period. An all-night sitting is one of the sights you may wish to see in your round-up of the town's Night Side, but you will find it much better fun to be in bed.

London, besides, attracts at this time vast numbers of people from all quarters of the globe—foreigners of every tongue and colonials—and they are always very keen to see everything. Foremost amongst the elements which go to swell the already-gorged city is the ever-enlarging 'Amurrican' invasion each spring, and at the head of the invaders is the pretty, brilliant, perplexing, distracting, American 'gal.' She is a woman of many ideas, but she is devoted to one above all others, and that is the 'good time.' She is determined to have it, and she does; in her eyes her male relatives exist for no other object than to supply the necessary wherewithal for the campaign. She is indefatigably pleasure-loving. She is very much in evidence in the Night Side of London Society—just as she is a feature of its Day Side, and in not a few smart sets she is queen. She comes, she is seen, she conquers. And at the end of each season her native newspapers recount with no inconsiderable pride the

The 'Amurrican' element.

number of dukes and other big game she has 'bagged.' You bet she has a 'good time.' Why, she was made for it!

How does London Society spend its evenings, its nights, before it goes to sleep? It makes, as a rule, a good long night of it before it turns in, jaded and faded and tired out. It has a good deal of sympathy with the Scotch laird who, on being called in the morning by his man, and being told that it was a wet day, ordered his servant to keep the blinds down and the shutters closed, and he'd 'make a night of it.' Well, how does Society spend its nights before it retires? Does not the Press unweariedly record it every morning? Some newspapers make a handsome thing for their proprietors out of the business, and, incidentally, afford anything but exiguous incomes to the ladies of title and others who furnish them with 'pars.' to go under some such heading as 'What Society Is Doing.' *Imprimis*, there are dinners. Of necessity, 'One must eat somewhere'—Lord Beaconsfield never said anything truer than that. 'Where is the man who can live without dining?' And we English have ever been trencher-men of renown; in fact, it has been broadly stated that we are a race of gluttons and coarse-feeders. But the charge is too sweeping; everything 'depends,' once one's first youth is past, on one's doctor chiefly; we are all slaves to Harley Street and 'cures' and courses of this thing or that. The specialist has his finger ever on our pulse, is ever looking at our tongue, is ever

'What Society Is Doing.'

regulating us like machines—as we are. Yet sometimes we venture, greatly daring, to flout and defy him. Think of the hundreds of decorously dull dinners, at which enormous quantities of food are consumed, that take place during each season, or of the savage supper-fights often seen at dances and balls! Truth to tell, the gentle art of dining delicately and daintily is not particularly understanded of the British people, great or small. We have plenty of French chefs, yet nothing (but the doctor, and not always he) can kill our English appetites. This is one of the things in regard to which each of us 'remains an Englishman.' A great chef once said there were just two kinds of dinner—one was a dinner, and the other wasn't. But as regards English dinners (when they are not of the second description), there are several kinds, such as the State Dinner, the Civic Banquet, the Club Dinner, the Restaurant Dinner, and the Private Dinner—the last-named ranging from the Feast to the Pot-luck. As a rule, the man who is invited to take pot-luck has a pressing engagement—otherwise he has dyspepsia for a week.

The State Dinner is pretty sure to be a solemn function, but if you have the honour of being present on one of these oppressive occasions, you can at least relieve the almost intolerable tedium of it by studying the deportment of your fellow-guests. The humorist has ever a perpetual feast of good things within and without himself, and humour has no recruiting-

sergeant so keen as the trained faculty of observation. Yet it never does to forget that humour is a dangerous thing, and therefore you will keep your ideas to yourself. Even at the Civic Banquet, where you have a wider, more broadly human field, it is well to remember this. At the Club Dinner, too, it is not a bad thing to recall how true this is. Here, perhaps, you are among friends who know you better than you know

About dinners.

yourself. But your sphere of observation is sure, except on special occasions, of which more anon, to be somewhat limited; for the Club Dinner is not what it was. Men don't dine at their clubs nowadays; they go with their wives or the wives of others (it is astonishing how this phrase will keep on repeating itself!) to partake of the Restaurant Dinner. These Restaurant Dinners are comparatively recent institutions, so to speak, having come

into vogue during the last few years, but they have become almost, if not altogether, the greatest feature of the Night Side of London high life. Fashion shifts about a bit amongst the larger restaurants, and there are certain of them more frequented by one smart set than another. But all, or nearly all, the big hotels have restaurants, and some of the smaller, and perhaps a trifle more select, have them too; they cater handsomely for *tout le monde* that can pay. So you may dine at Claridge's, or the Carlton, or the Cecil, or the Savoy, or, if you prefer a restaurant pure and simple, at Prince's, the Imperial, the Trocadero, the Criterion, Frascati's, and so forth. No shade of doubt but you get the best dinners in London at the restaurants, and see the most interesting company in them as well.

But it may be that you do not regard dining as the sole, or even the chief, business of life, and certainly 'all London' does not spend every evening in dining luxuriously or the reverse. So, after dinners, or in addition thereunto, what come next in the tale of the Night Side of 'high Sassiety,' as it is called in the music-halls? Well, of course, there are evening-parties innumerable—parties with music, receptions where professional entertainers sometimes, though not always, succeed in entertaining; evening card-parties, where bridge or poker will be the attraction (cards are also played after 'dinners'); 'small and earlies'; 'little dances,' where you may hope to sit out a dance or

Evening-parties.

two with your best girl if you have any luck; big private or subscription balls, penny plain or twopenny coloured—in other words, in ordinary evening attire or in fancy dress, though the latter are not common, the masquerade having died out pretty well from amongst us—and for cause; and last, but not least, skating-parties in the early part of the year, which now and again rise to the giddy height of being styled 'carnivals.' And there is no prettier sight in London than one of the skating-rinks when it is well filled. (What the present writer does not understand is why, seeing that London is so full of Scotsmen as to have earned the name of the Caledonian Asylum, curling-rinks are not added to the sporting equipment of the town in many quarters. Is it because the fair sex does not curl—there is a spacious opportunity to pun here or hereabouts, but it is magnanimously forgone.)

Then, of course, besides dinners and parties there are the theatres, the opera, concerts, the music-halls. London supports many theatres, and their number is always increasing. And London's taste in plays and players is amazingly catholic; it prefers comedy to tragedy, and has a liking in reason for farce, but so long as the piece is good, well acted, well put on, London patronises it generously. A poor play, however, has no chance.

Plays and players.

What high-life London wants is to be amused; it seeks for brightness, sparkle, pretty ensembles; it hates to be made to think.

It will have nothing to say to Ibsen, it likes Mr. George Alexander, but it prefers Mr. George Edwardes five days out of the six. Its standard of intelligence is not the highest in the world, but then you can't expect it to have everything. High living and plain thinking are not necessarily yokefellows, but they undoubtedly form the average team. If the combination ever by any chance reads a dramatic criticism, it may possibly look at half a dozen lines by Mr. Clement Scott, but at not a single sentence written by Mr. William Archer. There is one feature about the theatres which London Society does enjoy—it really has nothing to do with the theatres, but the theatres give it local colour, as a novelist would say. This is the 'Supper after the Theatres' idea. And here again the big restaurants come in once more with their lavish and luxurious, if not exactly disinterested, hospitality.

In the next chapter you shall be given some closer views, some less furtive peeps at the Night Side of London high life. For the present pray imagine you have been flattered by receiving an invitation to the Duchess of Blankshire's ball, and that you are now among her Grace's guests, of whom there are so many that it is somewhat difficult for you to get about. You came in excellent temper, for just before you started off for the Duchess's mansion—it should be called a palace, but that is not the English way—you remarked to your friends

CROWD ON THE GREAT STAIRCASE.

at the Club, who you knew had not been asked, with an irritatingly distinct voice, that you supposed you 'must go, though balls are such a bore'; you are therefore well aware that you are envied and sincerely detested by the men less fortunate than yourself—and this is to have succeeded! Each of them would like to tell you with conviction that your going to the ball, or your not going, won't make the slightest difference to anybody on earth, but they haven't the courage. So off you drive—perhaps a little after eleven o'clock—in high spirits, and very greatly tickled with yourself. You wait your turn in the street in the long line of carriages moving by fits and starts up to her Grace's door, and if your patience (much improved by that little speech of yours at the Club) is not too severely tried, you will in time descend and walk under a red canopy brilliantly lit with many twinkling electric lamps into the hall, which is filled with flowers and flunkies, to say nothing of people like yourself arriving all the while, and is also brilliantly illuminated with pink and silver lights. Your fellow-guests wear a pleased look on top of their clothes —this is part of the game of manners. Having deposited your hat and cape, you join the crowd on the great staircase (p. 73), in itself a thing of pride, and push or are pushed upwards to shake her Grace by the hand. Should she happen to know you, you may get a word or two from her, but as it is much

The Duchess of Blankshire's ball.

more likely that she hasn't the ghost of an idea who you are, you will pass silently by, and soon get lost in the crowd. It's a case of not being able to see the trees for the wood; one can't find one's friends in the crush—indeed, unless you are either very tall or particularly self-assertive, you may see hardly anybody. There is an awful story of a little man who got hemmed or penned into a corner of one of her Grace's rooms, and who remained there in a state of semi-suffocation until the rush down to supper mercifully put an end to his sufferings. It is therefore no bad plan to keep 'circulating' on every opportunity which presents itself.

It may be that you are a dancing man—a somewhat rare bird in these days. Her Grace's ballroom is the finest in London, and the music is insinuating and inviting—'Will you, won't you, come and join the dance?' You will—at least you would if you could, but you can't. The floor is already covered, and movement is difficult. A few couples are really dancing—wherever that is the case, you may bet with much safety that the lady is *une belle Americaine*; but the majority of the dancers are mere revolving figures, confined within a narrow orbit; if they attempt to get outside of it their career is immediately stopped by more revolving couples, who frown down the eccentricity of the other dancers. This is how it is in the waltzes. Your Englishman does better in a romping polka or in swinging barn-dance,

The 'Giddy Dance.'

for these are things in which brawn and muscle tell far more than skill, and the English girl has a weakness—a family feeling—for brawn and muscle. And in the Lancers—intended originally to be one of the most graceful and delightful of measures—you will also see a wonderful display of agility. Agility, of course, has its points, but it is not always beautiful; still, there it is! Having taken in so much of this, you perhaps come to the conclusion that the best way to enjoy a dance is to sit it out. So you take your partner and lead her out of the crush, and make for the stairs perhaps, or for some cosy nook or other where you may recover your breath, and say such things as are wont to be said on such occasions, wondering silently but persistently if you will be able to get any supper.

Supper is a matter of prime importance. Her Grace's mansion is a vast place, and the supper (if you can only get a chance to reach it) is sure to be excellent. But then her guests are legion; how are they all to be fed? If you are a really great personage, then, of course, you need have no misgivings. The Duchess will see that you are taken

care of. But if you belong to the crowd of people who are not great in any way, you will have to wait till 'Your Betters' are served, and take your turn by and by. It is just possible that you may have to scramble for your food—such things are not altogether unknown even at the Duchess of Blankshire's entertainments. Still, in process of time you will be fed and you will have your thirst quenched. Then back for an hour or two to the ballroom again, or to some other part of the house. After what you assure her Grace with a vacuous smile has been such a pleasant evening, you go off again at two or three in the morning, remarkably glad that it is all over. Later, you will gabble at the Club about the affair, and remark what a success it was! What a crowd! Everybody was there! The dear Duchess does those things so well! Never had a more ripping time! You fairly tumble over yourself as you tell the other 'chaps' about it.

Supper.

CHAPTER V

STILL 'IN SOCIETY'

'At the Blenheim an agreeable atmosphere of polite rakishness prevails which is peculiarly attractive to innocent women.'

PERCY WHITE, *The West End*.

HERE are some typical scenes.

On one evening you shall dine at the Cecil. Later, you shall take a look in at the Empire or the Alhambra or the Palace. That will be enough for one evening. If you respect your chef and the dinner he has provided for you (in other words, if you respect yourself), you will find the evening sufficiently well filled up by the dinner alone, but it is possible, if you are an energetic person, to take in both. A dinner at the Cecil will be not unlike a dinner at any other of the great hotels or restaurants, and it is selected for that reason; should you wish for more detailed information on the subject of restaurant dinners, then you are recommended to read some such book as that of Colonel Newnham-Davis on *Dinners and Dining*. The Cecil is now, with its hundreds of rooms, one of the largest hotels, if not the largest, in the world. In common with its neighbour, the

Dinner at the Hotel Cecil.

Savoy, it commands one of the finest views of its kind in any capital of the globe—the view of the Thames Embankment and the Thames itself. But as you probably won't dine much before eight o'clock, you may not be able to see it; at most the river will likely be indicated by numerous lights, to say nothing of huge electric advertisements. You ascend to the noble dining-room, your thoughts, however, intent on dinner, not scenery. Your footsteps are inaudible on the thick carpets—the whole atmosphere of the place is one of luxury. Here are serenity, peace, repose. The air is perfumed with the scent of flowers. The room is full, but not too full, of small tables, and on the tables are softly-glowing shaded lights. And the men and women who are dining, or about to dine, are all well-dressed, well-bred—at least, most of them. They are of all nationalities under the sun, but the majority of them are American. The dinner itself is not an English dinner—it is French. You can dine sumptuously for half a guinea, or you can pile up a monumental bill by ordering *à la carte*. And the wines are just what you have a mind (and a purse) to pay for. Everything, you will find, is done for you delicately, thoughtfully, well. You are given plenty of time to study the menu—and your fellow-guests; you talk to your friends with quiet enjoyment. And if you are wise you will eschew the eternal platitudes, as they do not improve digestion.

AT · THE
EMPIRE ·
TOM
BROWNE

Well, you have had your liqueur and your coffee and your cigar or cigarette: it is now ten o'clock, you reflect, and there are a couple of hours at least before bedtime. You have a hansom called for you, and you are driven to one of the three higher-class music-halls, if that is your wish, or to one of the others, where you will perhaps be even better entertained but at somewhat less cost. At or about a quarter-past ten the best 'turn' of the evening is on at the Halls. To say the truth, there is nothing very strikingly new to be seen at the Halls, but then is there anything new under the sky? Perhaps the current feature of the show which is 'going strong' is a dance, or a song, or a combination of both, or some juggle or other—you have seen all this kind of thing, you tell yourself somewhat gratuitously, for you knew what to expect before you came, a hundred times before, but all the same you look on, and you know you will do so again. The turn over, you get up from your stall, go up the stairs to the 'Promenade' —and open your eyes very wide. Here you will certainly see a crowd of men and women, and you will hardly require to be told who the ladies are and what they are doing here. The men smoke, drink, talk. The women stand or move about, their wandering glances keen and inquisitive. Here and there these painted ladies are seated, but their eyes rove restlessly always until they fasten on some individual who appears willing to respond. It is a

In the music-halls.

strange spectacle—this exchange, this traffic, this Fair in Frail Flesh; but this, too, is no new thing; indeed, in one way or another, it also belongs to the category, it is to be feared, of

the eternal platitudes. 'Well, say, what d'you think o' the Show?' 'Same old Show!' By the way, there is one thing you should not fail to notice, and that is the general high excellence

of the music provided by the orchestras in the Halls.

Another evening you dine early, for you are going to the opening night of the Opera Season at Covent Garden. This is always one of the chief events of the season—to many it is *the* event. There is plenty of music of all kinds to be heard in London all the year round, but the Opera at Covent Garden is its highest expression. The Opera House itself is not an impressive building, comparing none too favourably with the opera-houses of Paris, or Vienna, or even New York. But on the opening night of the season, or on a night when a great singer is to appear, there is no more brilliant sight to be seen in any land than the interior of Covent Garden Opera House. Long before the hour announced for the curtain to be raised carriages in a row half a mile in length stand, or slowly crawl towards the door under the portico, their movements carefully guarded and regulated by the police. Some minutes before the curtain goes up the auditorium is packed with as many great, distinguished, or rich people as it can hold. It is a wonderful society gathering. In the boxes you shall see rank, beauty, fashion; fair faces, with eyes flashing or languorous, above dazzling shoulders; the gleam of diamonds, the glitter of jewels, the flirting of fans; confections the most artistic and superb in dress and costume *de Paris*—their wearers set off by the plain, undis-

Opera at Covent Garden.

tinguished evening attire of the men, as if by the most splendid of foils. And in the stalls it is much the same. Here, in brief, is Everybody that is Anybody—peers, peeresses, statesmen, great ladies, diplomats, politicians, high financiers, merchant princes—*tout le monde et sa femme*. And amongst them it is just possible there are some genuine lovers of music.

You are so much taken up with looking about you at the brilliant ensemble that you pay no heed at first to the orchestra tuning up. But you do notice the conductor enter, and, baton in hand, bow to the audience. Presently the curtain is raised, and discloses the company in the costumes of the opera of the evening. The prima donna comes a little step forward; every one rises while she sings the first verse of the National Anthem; the other singers join her in singing 'God Save the King.' Then everybody, having engaged in this exercise, sits down, his sentiment of loyalty gratified. In a minute or two more the opera begins—it is rarely a new opera; the old favourites are preferred, always with the exception of Wagnerian opera, which has come to stay. (It is Mark Twain who has assured the world that the works of Wagner contain far more music than you might suspect on hearing them performed.) At the close of the acts the chief

At the Opera.

singers, the conductor, the manager, and perhaps a few others (but not the scene-shifters, as it has somewhere been mendaciously asserted) are summoned before the curtain, and vigorously applauded. The social side of the thing is to be seen in visits paid from box to box in the intervals, and the smoking foyer is a centre, where men meet and compare notes, though it is tolerably certain the notes will not be concerned so much with the music as with the people who are present. 'Isn't Lady So-and-so looking remarkably well to-night? Wonder how she does it! She's fifty if she's a day! Wonderful! And look at little Laura ——! She's another wonder. Did you see *he* was in the box? Well, if her husband can stand it, it's all right, I suppose.' And so on and so on. Somewhere about midnight the opera comes to an end. Perhaps you go home, or perhaps you go to supper at somebody else's, for there are some superb supper-parties given after the opera's over. Or you may go to one of the clubs, where you will have something to eat, and exchange more gossip about your neighbours. A wit once said that the most interesting things in the world to cats were other cats; the most interesting things in the world to men and women are other men and women, and so you talk and talk and talk!

A third evening you dine early again, and go to one of the theatres; it is a 'first-night,' a *première*. Should it be a really great occasion—the production of a new play by Pinero, or the reappearance in title-

roles of favourite actors and actresses—you will assuredly find yourself in some of the best company in England. For there is in London a small regiment of industrious and indefatigable 'first-nighters,' nearly all clever people, and many of them distinguished in art or letters or in some other way, who would almost endure anything rather than miss a 'first-night' at the theatre. Amongst the audience will be a large number of those strange and fearsome folk called dramatic critics, and if you will go and stand in the foyer between the acts, and listen to the remarks of these curious people, you will be not a little entertained. But should you be a friend of one of the actors you may listen with some fear and trembling, for on the verdicts of the foyer much of the success or failure of the piece depends.

'First-nights.'

Of recent years there has been a great multiplication of theatres in London, not only in central London, where you will find the so-styled West End houses, but all over the metropolis. And in the theatres of Kensington and Fulham and Clapham and other districts of the town you will see as good acting and as well-mounted pieces as you will see anywhere—and you will see them for far less money. For it is the one rule to which there is no exception, that belonging to the West End, being in the West

End, buying in the West End, doing anything whatsoever in the West End, will cost you more than it will anywhere else on earth. If on theatrical pleasure bent, you will find it no bad scheme to drive down, say, to the Coronet, and spend your evening there for a change. Besides, you will behold other classes of people altogether. For there Suburbia, which is much in evidence in the West End in the afternoons at matinees and 'Pops,' goes to the play of an evening. And it is more and more getting into the habit of frequenting the playhouses situated in its midst, and less and less of going to the West End theatres. As a great treat it goes occasionally to the Haymarket, or Wyndham's, or the Garrick, or some other of the central houses; it makes a point of marching in its families to the Pantomime at Drury Lane at Christmas-time; but for the most part it is well content with its local theatres. The East End theatre proper and music-hall belong to a different class, and you shall see something of them by and by.

Non-West End theatres.

If you have been to a 'first-night' at one of the central houses, the odds are that you are one of a party, and that a supper at the Carlton will appropriately wind up the evening. If you happen to be the host you will have taken care to apprise the authorities of the hotel of your intention to sup, and have secured a table; if you have not done so in advance you may make the unpleasant discovery that you cannot be accommodated, for often in the

season, and indeed sometimes out of it, people have to be turned away. But you suffer no unhappy rebuff of this sort, for your table has been engaged—you are expected. It may be the table is in a line with the door leading into the great hall, where after supper you will sit for a few minutes and have your coffee and last drink and smoke; but if you sit at this particular table, you have the advantage of seeing the guests as they enter, and in this way you get to know the company you are in. The supper is *prix-fixe* and is good; the wines, too, are choice. It may be questioned if there is any place in the world where anything is better done than at the Carlton (particularly in its grill-room), though Prince's and the Imperial run it close. This supper is a cheerful function. You are in an atmosphere of soft lights, sweet music, pretty women—add to it all the effective green background of the decoration of the wall. There is the pleasant hum of conversation, and the voices are not shrill or loud. The waiters move about noiselessly. Everything goes on velvet. And the people you see are all interesting: there a well-known man of fashion, here a celebrated actress in a ravishing gown; there a gallant soldier back from the Front, here an authoress, a lady-playwright, of renown; there a great lady, a princess, here a man of genius whose fame is world-wide. And the eternal human comedy-tragedy is being played for all it is worth. You read stories into the smiling faces; you make guesses, vague or clear; you

Supper at the Carlton.

SUPPER · AT ·
THE · CARLTON ·
TOM BROWNE
1902

build up little romances, see hints of little ironies; you indulge in pleasant little dreams, or glance away from what may become a tragedy. In a word, you are looking on at another phase of the Show.

Still another evening, and you are at Prince's, but on this occasion you have not gone to sup or dine, but to a dance in the Galleries above the restaurant. The party is given by a friend of yours, perhaps, and he is giving this entertainment (which you may be sure will cost him the proverbial Pretty Penny) to celebrate the twenty-first birthday of his daughter. It is a pretty attention on the part of Papa, but his pretty daughter well deserves it. The dance begins at an hour which allows you to dine comfortably before going to the Galleries, and when you get there you have the privilege of being presented to the young lady who is the Heroine of the Occasion, and who receives your congratulations with a charming smile. Perhaps you ask for the honour of a dance, but miss, bless her! has to dance with so many that your chance of a polite refusal is a good one. Well, there are others, for the picture-lined walls enclose an array of living pictures a great deal more interesting than the works of the painter-fellows, however excellent they may be. The band strikes up, and the dancers (you soon see this is a dance at which people do really dance) begin to swing and sway to the dreamy measures of the waltz. If you do not dance, or cannot dance, you can sit out in other rooms where palms and other innocuous things will

A dance in Prince's Galleries.

give you a certain shelter—if the circumstances, that is, suggest that a little concealment is not a bad idea. Then, all the evening, dance after dance, with an interval of an hour or so for a supper to which the whole company can sit down in peace and comfort, and without being mobbed and ragged to death. This, you see, is an almost, or an altogether, perfect dance; it is not a great scramble of an affair such as the Duchess of Blankshire's was. It is a dance of the débutante, so to speak; a dance of youth and pleasure in life's gay morn; but it is well done, comfortably done; and you are grateful. As for the young lady herself, you think, as you go over the scene afterwards, of Thackeray's lines—

'She comes!—she's here!—she's past!
'And heaven go with her!'

CHAPTER VI

NOT 'IN SOCIETY'

''The damp, river-scented earth slipped under his feet. The blare of a steam clarion, and the bang of a steam-driven drum, sounded, and the naphtha lamps of the merry-go-round and the circus gleamed through the fog.'—DAVID CHRISTIE MURRAY, *Despair's Last Journey.*

LIKE all great cities London is a city of the most astounding contrasts. The same night which sees the pretty birthday-dance at Prince's, the charming supper-party at the Carlton, and the like, also sees the cheap Soho after-the-theatre restaurant-supper, the Shilling Hop, the Penny Gaff, and their like. Not that these last-named expressions of the Night Side of London should be mixed up indiscriminately, for in these, as in most things, there are degrees. For instance, there is a world of difference between the Masked Ball (of which more anon) and the innocent Shilling Hop (which, too, you shall be taken to by and by). But you must now allow yourself to go from the top to the bottom of society. And as you descend this long ladder, you shall pause here and there. The transition from high to low is not so abrupt as many imagine; indeed, there are many steps. Take as an example the typical

cheap restaurant of Soho. The highest class of Soho restaurant, such as Kettner's, is of course very good; there are no cosier private dining-rooms in all London than those you find at Kettner's. But Kettner's has for years past ceased to be a cheap restaurant; its prices now range with those of the greatest restaurants. No, the typical Soho restaurant is that which gives a three-shilling, a half-crown, a two-shilling, or an eighteenpenny dinner, and a supper, after the theatre, for a shilling or a little more. And though you may suspect that some of the dishes on the menu are fearfully and wonderfully made, still these dinners and suppers are simply 'amazing value.'

You dine in Soho.

Apart from such places as Kettner's—by the way, it began by being a cheap restaurant like its humbler neighbours; its fortune, it is said, was made when it was discovered by a former editor of the *Times*—the highest-priced of the ordinary Soho dinners is no more than three shillings at the Florence or half a crown, as at the Italie. But you can do very well at such restaurants as the Boulogne for two shillings, or at Guermani's for eighteenpence. Two or three of these restaurants have a reputation which is almost world-wide—such as the Roche. Again, there is the Gourmets—where you may dine very cheaply *à la carte*, beginning with *potage bonne femme*, which will cost you twopence a plate. And so on. It will pay you very well to spend an evening, say once a fortnight, in exploring

The Soho dinner.

the Soho restaurants. And not only is the food good, but the people you see are interesting. Here you may certainly study types of men and women you

will hardly behold outside of this district. And then look at the menu. It begins with *hors d'œuvres variés*—sardines, smoked herring, anchovies, olives, tomato-salad. Then, your choice of clear or thick

soups—and the soups (Heaven only knows what's in them!) of Soho are simply, marvellously excellent. Now follows the fish-course, and here, alas! the Soho restaurant does not always shine, and this, it may be guessed, is because fish is never cheap in London. Then an entrée, after which comes the 'Farinasse,' which is usually maccaroni in one form or another. In some restaurants, notably Guermani's, the maccaroni is worth the whole price of the dinner. And next there is a slice off the fillet or a piece of chicken, or rather *poulet rôti*, which du Maurier always declared was quite a different thing from roast-chicken. Finally sweets, cheese, fruit. And all for two shillings or eighteenpence! As for the wines, you can have what you are willing to pay for. But it may be said, that as the Soho establishments are much frequented by foreigners from wine-drinking countries, who presumably know good wine, you probably get tolerable stuff at an exceedingly moderate price. Especially is this the case with respect to such Italian wines as Capri, Barolo, and Chianti. All the Franco-Italian restaurants provide special after-the-theatre suppers at from half a crown to eighteenpence, which are quite as amazing as their dinners.

And this leads to the remark that nearly all the restaurants of London are in the hands of foreigners, principally Italians. Moreover, these foreign restaurants are spreading all over London; they are no longer confined to Soho. You will find them

in Whitechapel, in the Borough, in Putney, in New Cross, and so on. If you care to do so, you shall dine at one of these places in the south-east district, and spend the evening afterwards at a typical East End entertainment, say, in Deptford. Or, if you prefer to get yourself still more *en rapport* with your surroundings, you can take a seat in a little box-like stall in an 'eating-house'—a much humbler kind of thing than the foreign restaurant—peculiar to the locality, where you shall dine (dine, please remember) on a twopenny pie, or, if you will venture to go the 'whole elephant,' off a bowl of stewed eel. Your twopenny pie will be of astonishingly generous proportions—to a hungry man it will seem a feast. And as for the dish of stewed eel—why, there is no delicacy of the Carlton grill-room to be compared with it; at least, that is what your East End epicure believes; but then he knows the stewed eel passing well and the Carlton grill not at all.

The East End eating-house.

Then, having feasted at a charge of a few pence, you go out into the swarming streets. And, to appreciate properly all this aspect of the Night Side of London, you must choose a Saturday night, when, in very truth, the streets do swarm with people. Wet or dry, it hardly matters, the thoroughfares are black with people shopping and gossiping. Both sides of the streets are lined with shops, before many of which stand salesmen vociferously calling attention to the excellence and low price of their wares. In front of the butchers' stalls, in particular, you shall see men eagerly addressing the crowd, while their constant shouts of 'Buy, buy, buy!' rend the air. ''Ave it at yer own price!' they cry. 'Given awiy! Given awiy! Buy, buy, buy! Buy, buy!' It is a sort of Babel—but it all means business. And if you were to stay here to watch for two or three hours—till half-past eleven, when the very very poor come forward in the hope of getting bargains, and listened to the deafening clamour, you would think business impossible. But there is a great deal done for all that. You will be irresistibly reminded of the cat-story, in which the father said, in reply to the fears expressed by his little boy that there would soon be very few pussies left, ''cos last night I heard 'em all swearin', and fightin', and bitin', and killin' each other on the roof,'—'No, no, little son, the only result of all that noise you heard will be *more cats*, not fewer!'

'Buy, buy, buy!'

And as you walk along you come to a sort of alley, up which move many figures; they are going to see 'the show'—an East End show. And you follow in their wake. As you enter the alley you see on your left a huge poster, whereon is depicted an enormous elephant, and you are at once taken with the picture of the colossal beast. Naturally, you expect to see him in the menagerie beyond, which is one of the chief features of the show to which you have invited yourself. It is only when you are returning this way again, after having been in the menagerie, in which you have *not* seen the elephant, that you look at the poster a second time, and now you observe that the elephant is stated as being on exhibition at the Agricultural Hall, and not here at all! But 'how's that' for advertising? The poster of this poster is evidently a bit of a wag. Or, is it that he is in collusion with the proprietors of the menagerie up the yard? You move forward under flaring arches of gaslights for a short distance, and in a moment or two you stand in a yard of some size, brilliantly illuminated. As Mr. Murray remarks in the quotation with which this chapter begins, 'the blare of a steam clarion, and the bang of a steam-driven drum, sounded, and the naphtha lamps of the merry-go-round and the circus gleamed through the fog.' But there are differences between Mr. Murray's picture of the show at Reading which he described and that now before your eyes.

The merry-go-round.

For, here, the merry-go-round boasts electric lamps instead of naphtha, a menagerie takes the place of the circus, and there is no fog—though perhaps the night is dark, and there is a drizzle in the air. The merry-go-round is certainly a handsome affair, and is handsomely supported by the crowd, who mount upon its 'fiery, long-tailed snorters' with all the will in the world. And these steeds, mark you, do not only go 'wound and wound,' but also move up and down with their riders. 'All life-size, and twice as natural!' And then the music, the Cyclopean music of the steam clarion! And the thunder of the steam-driven drum! And all for a penny a ride! Will you have one? It will perhaps make you seasick? you answer. Well, there's something in that. So you look at something else.

All round the capacious yard, except on the side where stands the menagerie, and the other side where is the big engine which drives the hobby-horses arrangement, are ranged various devices for extracting pennies from your pockets. They are mostly of the three-shies-a-penny variety, and a spice of skill (or would you call it 'luck'?) enters into them all. If you are successful, a prize rewards you. You are anxious to enter into the spirit of the thing, and you begin by investing a penny in three rings, which you endeavour to throw in such a way as to land them round the handle of a

'Three shies a penny!'

knife stuck into the wall. It looks easy, and you go into the business with a light heart. But—but you don't succeed. Another penny—you try again, and again you are defeated. What 'O! Another penny—and this time you accept defeat, and move on to the next stall, where another penny gives you the privilege of trying to roll three balls into certain holes with numbers attached thereunto. Should you score twenty you will win a cigar. But you do no more than score nine. Undiscouraged, or perhaps encouraged by this fact, you spend another penny, and another, and another—but you don't get the cigar, and it is well for you that you don't! For there are cigars and cigars. On you go, and next you try your hand at the cocoa-nuts, or the skittles, or the clay-pipes, or in the shooting-alleys. And so on and on—*until* your stock of pennies and patience is exhausted. Then you turn to the menagerie.

Your interest in this particular show ought to be greatly heightened by the fact that on the platform outside it there is displayed the announcement, 'Last Night,' but you have already heard that it is always the 'Last Night' with this entertainment, and therefore you are not wildly excited. The front of the menagerie exhibits several extraordinary representations of scenes in which lions, tigers, and other ferocious beasts appear to be about to devour their tamer. As you gaze on these blood-curdling pictures, the showman in a tremendous voice bids you 'Walk

up, walk up, ladies and gentlemen!' And you do walk up, and soon you are inside the place, and your protesting nostrils ask you why you insult them in this way—for your first impression of the menagerie is that it is one vast offensive smell. Having got somewhat accustomed to this odour, you go round with the crowd, and see a fine young lion in his cage, a couple of lionesses in a second, a black bear and a hyena in a third, half a dozen wolves in a fourth, some dejected-looking monkeys and a cat of the domestic variety in a fifth, a kangaroo in another, and so on. There are eight or ten cages in all, and certainly you can't in reason expect much more for twopence, which is the charge for admission.

The menagerie.

On one side is an opening into a side-show, 'price one penny.' A man, standing on a box at the entrance to it, cries out in a loud voice that in the side-show are to be seen three of the 'greatest novelties in the whole world.' One of them, he tells you, is a petrified woman, the second is the smallest kangaroo in existence, and the third is the largest rat alive. A curious little collection, is it not? At any rate it draws an audience to the speaker on the box. In a minute or two he passes into the side-show, and you go with him. First, he shows you the tiny kangaroo, a greyish-white, squirming creature, with long hind legs and a very long thick tail; it was born in the menagerie, the showman declares. Next, you are asked to gaze upon

The side-show.

A TYPICAL EAST END SHOWMAN.

the petrified woman. You see a gruesome object in leathery brown skin. 'A little over a hundred years ago,' says the showman in a solemn tone, 'this woman, a sister of mercy, was walking about just like you or me. (We weren't walking about—but that's a detail.) She had gone with a rescue-party into a mine in Wales, but she herself was lost. When her body was found years later in the mine, it was discovered in the petrified condition in which you now see it!' He invites any lady or gentleman in the audience to touch the Thing, but no one is in the least anxious to do so. Then he moves on to another box, pulls up a curtain, and discloses a handsome bright-eyed animal, the size of a fox, which he assures you is the largest rat in the world; it was 'lately captured by a soldier in the Transvaal, and brought to this country; secured by us at enormous expense!'

But now the celebrated lion-tamer is about to give his performance in the menagerie, and you press back into the main show. The lion-tamer, attired in what looks like a cycling-suit which had seen much better days, whip in hand, enters the cage where are the wolves, and puts them through a few simple movements. They appear to be very tame indeed, and behave much in the way dogs would. But the next performance is quite another kind of thing. The lion-tamer, it is announced, is to try to force an entrance into the cage of the young lion, 'only three and

The lion-tamer.

a half years old—the age at which lions are most ferocious,' says the orator with meaning. He continues, 'Now, ladies and gentlemen, I must tell you that the lion-tamer enters this cage at the risk of his life. I must request you all to keep silence, so that the lion will not be excited more than is necessary. Remember the lion-tamer is in peril of his life. He will try to enter the cage. Should he succeed, I will ask you to give him a hearty cheer. He is risking his life!' He concludes his oration gloomily. All of which makes, as it was intended to make, a vast impression on the audience.

What follows deserves a paragraph to itself—it is remarkable, to say the least of it, that is, if it is not all a 'put-up job.' Two or three attendants, armed with things that resemble pikes, range themselves in front of the cage. Perhaps there are some hot irons at their feet. The lion-tamer endeavours to enter by a door on the left, but the lion springs to meet him with a roar, thrusts his paw against the door, and the tamer is beaten back. Next, he essays a door on the right, but the lion once more out-manœuvres him, and the tamer remains on the outside. There are murmurs of joyful excitement in the crowd, and again

The lion.

they are entreated to keep quiet. The tamer now tries the first door again, but the lion, after a short yet determined struggle, prevails, and the tamer is defeated. Then he tries the second door again, but with no better success. By this time the lion—he is really a fine, handsome, even noble specimen—appears to be in a wild rage; his roars fill the place; he snarls fiercely; he bites at the bars of his cage. The people stand patiently, wondering what is to be the next move of the lion-tamer. It is soon revealed. In the middle of the bars of the cage there is a narrow aperture, and through this slit is thrust an arrangement of thin boards, which nearly, but not quite, divides the cage in two. The lion is penned in on one side; the tamer enters by the door farthest away; the board is withdrawn; the tamer cracks his whip; the lion springs at him with a growl, but the great beast flashes past the tamer. Again the whip is cracked, and the king of beasts runs round the cage once or twice. When his back is turned, the tamer makes a quick exit, and all is over. The whole thing, whether trick or not, is dramatic. The cheers which had been asked for in advance are now given with a will. And thereafter the tamer goes into the cage of the two lionesses, but after the last performance this seems comparatively tame and stupid, for the lionesses are as docile as cats. The band plays 'God save the King,' and the people flock out. They certainly have had their pennies' worth. By the way, one of the little graceful attentions paid you by this show, so to speak, is

that 'God save the King' is played about every quarter of an hour—to give those inside a hint, doubtless, that they are not expected to stop all night in the menagerie, and to encourage those hesitating outside to go in at once, or they will lose their last chance. Of course, the East End menagerie is not the West End 'Hippodrome,' but you think of the difference in price. Not that here in Deptford you will always see a menagerie. Sometimes it will be a genuine 'Penny Gaff,' or theatre, to which the admission is one penny; if you want a seat (a 'stall') you will have to pay twopence or even threepence. And here you will be vastly entertained. There are always two plays on the programme: one a tragedy, the other a farce. 'To-night will be presented the blood-curdling drama of "Maria Martin, or the Murder in the Red Barn." Or the play may be 'Three-Fingered Bob, or the Dumb Man of Manchester.' And here you shall have veritable villains of the deepest dye, heroines of unimaginable virtue and loveliness, heroes—the whole old stale bag o' tricks, in fact. And as for the audience, never was there one which so thoroughly detested villains, and so wholeheartedly adored lovely and virtuous heroines. How they enjoy the complete defeat of the former!—you can tell that by the enthusiastic way in which the crowd hisses them; and how they delight in the final triumph of the heroines! It matters not that during the whole time the performance is going on the audience has been eating fried fish, or sucking

The penny gaff.

oranges, or cracking nuts, or otherwise attending to its inner man. Nay, these light refreshments are all part and parcel of the entertainment. You can see 'Lizer' turn from the villain dying on the stage to the bit of fish she has in her hand with fresh relish and vigour—because the black-hearted scoundrel is meeting his just reward. And then the farce! Its subject not infrequently deals with the countryman just come to London. He travels to the big town in a smock, and he carries over his shoulder his small belongings in a red cotton handkerchief. Of course, he is as green as his own fields, and how he is laughed at by those knowing East Enders!

Another time you may find the Penny Gaff has been replaced by Wax Works, or a Ghost Show, or something else. But it is in these, and such as these, that one phase of the Night Side of the East End of London expresses itself. Now for another—the East End music-hall.

CHAPTER VII

AN EAST END MUSIC-HALL

'Let youth, more decent in their follies, scoff
The nauseous scene, and hiss thee reeling off.'
STEELE, *The Tatler*, No. 266.

THE music-hall must be considered a chief feature of the Night Side of London; it is certainly one of the most popular, whether in the West End or the East. Its leading comedian, Mr. Dan Leno, has been honoured by a 'command' of the King. It is a far cry, however, from the humour and whimsicalities of 'good old Dan' to the comicalities of the typical East End music-hall star. But it matters not whether the hall is within a stone's-throw of Piccadilly or outside the radius, it is ever a popular institution. One of the sights of the town is the long queue of people standing outside the Alhambra, the Empire, the Palace, the Tivoli, the 'Pav.,' the Oxford, and other halls, until the doors leading to pit and gallery are thrown open. The queue often has to wait for a considerable time, sometimes in the pouring rain, but it does so with wonderful

The waiting queue.

patience and good-humour—the wait being frequently enlivened by the strains of the nigger minstrel, or some other open-air entertainer. To-night you shall go to the Palace of Varieties at Greenwich. Last night you were at Deptford, and now you travel half a mile or more further south-eastward. Perhaps you begin this particular evening with a fish-dinner at the famous Ship, just opposite Greenwich Hospital, and though the Ship is not quite the fashionable resort it once was, you may do a great deal worse than dine there.

You make your way to the Palace of Varieties, Greenwich. You are, perhaps, a trifle late, and on inquiry you find the only seats left are 'fauteuils,' price one-and-six. For a thorough appreciation of the humours of the scene you should have come earlier and got a place in the gallery, price threepence. But you have no option, so you plunge recklessly, and bang goes one-and-sixpence. The fauteuils prove to be seats in the front row, and those vacant when you arrive are immediately behind the conductor of the orchestra. Well, you are a bit too near the music, but there is some compensation, for you are able to see how the conductor conducts and at the same time adds to the quality and tone of his band. With his left hand, you observe, he plays a piano, what time he manipulates a harmonium with his right. And all the while he seems to be able to exchange

confidences with the first violin, who, you cannot fail to perceive, is a wag. You do not take this in all at once, for your eyes at first are fastened on the stage, where two comely females are engaged in a vigorous encounter of words, which you surmise may lead eventually to something very like blows — as it does. You pick up the subject or the object, which you please, of the duel of tongues between the two ladies, one of whom is dressed like a superior shop-assistant, while the other might be a factory-girl. They both lay claim to the affections of a certain 'Charlie,' and in the wordy warfare that ensues they do not spare each other. 'Do you know,' asks the superior shop-assistant in a shrill voice, 'that I have blue blood in my veins?' 'What I do know,' retorts the other, with great deliberation, 'is that you'll soon have red blood on your nose!' Whereat the house, hugely tickled, roars delightedly. 'Do you know,' cries the first, 'that my father occupies an important, a very important, position in the town?' 'As a mud-pusher, I suppose!' And again the audience

'Charlie.'

screams its appreciation; indeed, the audience does this on the slightest provocation during this particular 'turn.' Finally, the end you have foreseen comes. A little fisticuff battle concludes the action—without any damage to either of the scrappers, who suddenly stop, shake hands, and stand bowing and smiling before the footlights. The curtain descends, and the band plays a loud and lively air, the cornet, in particular, adding several horse-power to its volume and momentum, so to speak.

Next appears upon the stage a young lady, rouged, powdered, decolletée, short-frocked; she is a mimic, and, as you soon perceive, a clever one. She gives personations of some well-known popular music-hall favourites. Thus, she imitates Eugene Stratton in his 'Lily of Laguna,' and Happy Fanny Fields in an American-German song. In the latter character she says to the audience, 'Why don't you

applaud me more? Don't you know that the more you applaud me the more money I make?' And don't they applaud! The place fairly rocks with laughter and hoarse shouts. To this young lady succeeds the Artist Lightning Sketcher—he is also a ventriloquist. He provides himself with the figures ventriloquists usually introduce into their pieces by a very simple device. He draws them on a large sheet of paper with chalks of red, black, and green, while you look on. Next he makes you a picture of St. Peter's at Rome on a big smoked plate—and all in a minute or two. Then he does something even more ambitious—it is his great lightning picture, called 'The Home of the Sea Gull.' There is a large white sheet of paper on a board; he takes various chalks—vermilion, blue, green, black, orange—and hey! presto, there are blue sky, green water, black rocks, white gulls, and a black steamer (a Newcastle boat, evidently) belching forth black smoke, to say nothing of a black man in a black boat! And all in a moment. No wonder the audience shouts its approval. This spurs the lightning artist to a Still More Amazing Feat. Stepping forward with a profound bow, he announces that he will, in a couple of moments, without rubbing

Some of the turns.

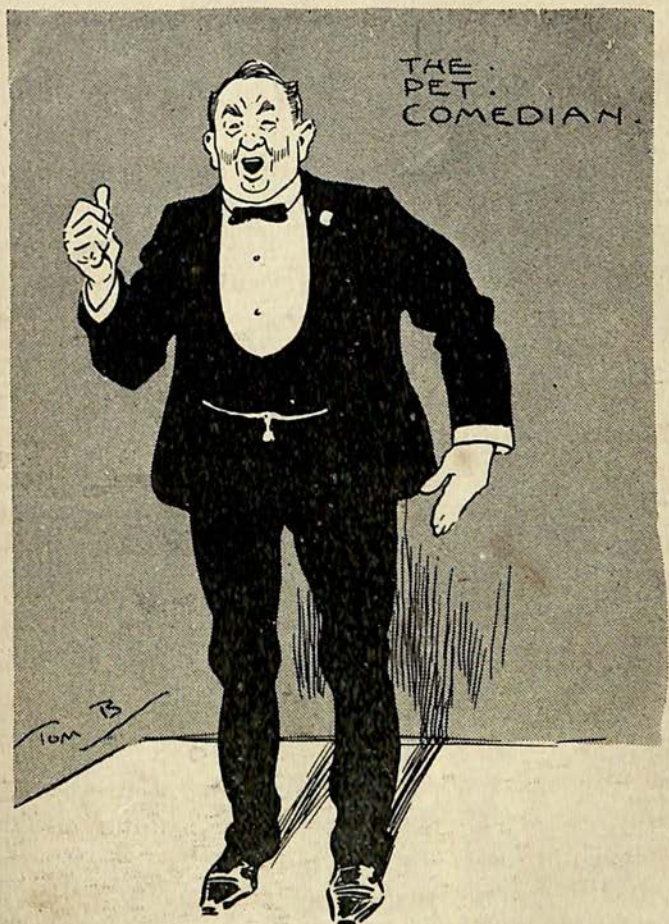
out a single mark on 'The Home of the Sea Gull,' convert that masterpiece into another, and very different, picture, entitled 'A Summer Evening Walk in the Country.' And he does it! Wonderful man! Again flash the chalks of vermilion, blue, green, black, orange. The blue sky is now gorgeous with the splendours of a dying sunset; the green water becomes green earth; the black rocks are transformed into black trees; the black steamboat, and the black man, and the black boat, are replaced by black trees with black foliage; and the white gulls roost under cover of the black leaves also. Finally, a touch or two, and there is a pair of lovers in the foreground. 'I calls that fine,' says a deep voice behind you; ''e's clever, 'e is!' Every one thinks the same, for the lightning artist is awarded thunderous applause, as is only right in the circumstances. And yet there be some who say that Art is not appreciated in this country!

Now there trips upon the platform another young lady. First she sings a song about a young angel from the Angel (at Isling-t-u-n) who had four little angels at 'ome, although the gay young spark who was courting her appeared to be unaware of this extremely interesting fact. Somehow, the fact does not interest the audience, and the song is received with the sort of silence that is audible half a mile away. 'Ain't no good,' says the deep voice in the rear; 'she'll 'ave to go!' Poor girl! But her second turn is a dance, and this is received

with considerable favour, so perhaps she will be kept on after all. To fail at even an East End hall must be a terrible business for an *artiste*; it means, if it means anything, the streets, starvation, death. While your mind may, perhaps, run on in this melancholy fashion a lion comique puts in an appearance, and your thoughts are whirled away. The lion comique is nothing if not immensely patriotic. In an enormous voice he shouts that King Edward is 'one of the best' of kings; in a second verse he yells that Lord Charles Beresford is 'one of the best' in the navy; in a third that General Buller is 'one of the best' in the army—all of which statements are uproariously welcomed. This patriotic ditty is followed by a sentimental song, 'When the Children are All in Bed,' and it is keenly appreciated. The audience, led by the first violin, who plays and, at the same time, sings the air with all the strength of his lungs, takes up the chorus with might and main. For your East Ender loves a sentimental song nearly as much as he loves his beer.

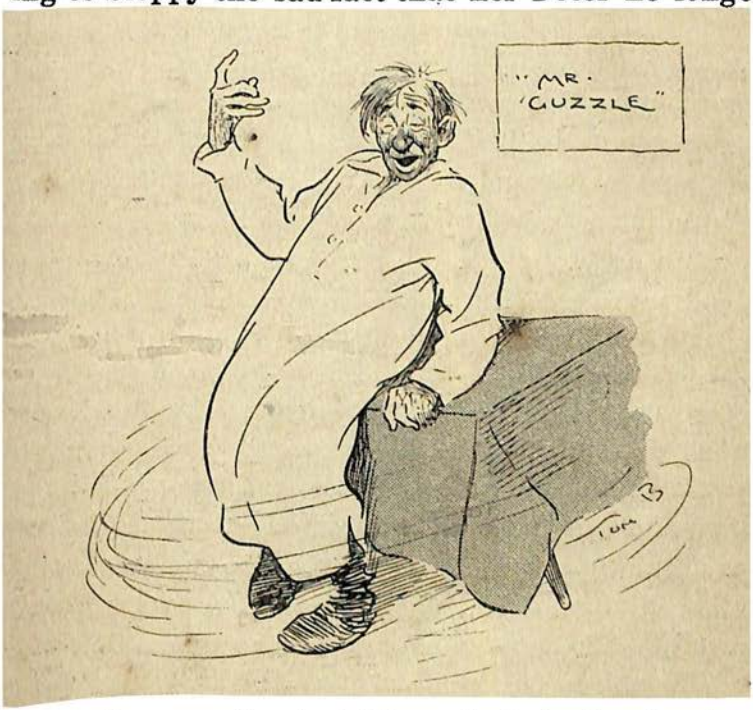
'One of the Best.'

And now there comes the chief turn on the programme—it is a Sketch, by the Lynn family—Brother Lynn, so to speak, and two Sisters Lynn, though the family resemblance between them all is remarkably faint. The two ladies prove to be the same who appeared in the Abusive Duet of which 'Charlie' was the subject a little while back. Mr., or Brother, Lynn, is new to you. The


THE
PET.
COMEDIAN.
TOM B

superior shop-assistant is now 'Mrs. Guzzle,' and the factory-girl is her servant, 'Sloppy.' Brother Lynn is 'Mr. Guzzle,' Mr. Peter Guzzle. These are the *dramatis personæ*. When the curtain goes up Mrs. Guzzle is bewailing to Sloppy the sad fact that her Peter no longer

The Guzzle Family Sketch.



comes home early o' nights, and that when he does come he is invariably the worse, much the worse, for 'boose.' They take counsel together as to what is to be done to win Guzzle from his evil ways, and they hit on a great idea. This is nothing less than to lie in wait for Peter this very evening as

ever was, get him to bed, and then pretend when he wakes up that he is dead—as dead as a red herring, or anything else that is most emphatically dead. Peter arrives upon the scene very drunk—he explains that he has been presiding at a teetotal meeting, and that it has gone slightly to his head. He is got off to bed, but in a surprisingly short time he reappears attired in his nightshirt, which is a commodious garment, whereunto is attached an enormous frill. He announces that he is come in search of the 'water-bottle,' a statement which the audience receives with a yell of derision. And now enter Sloppy, who with tears (perhaps they keep her from seeing her master) laments the death of 'poo' mahster,' but is inclined to rejoice that her missus is rid of such a scamp. 'It won't be long before she marries agin. There was that 'andsome young feller that admired 'er sech a lot—o' course, they'll make a match of it!' And so on. Guzzle listens in amazement, exclaiming that he is not dead, but Sloppy makes as if Guzzle did not exist. So much so that Mr. Guzzle begins to think there must be some truth in what she says—he *is* dead, and he howls out the question, 'Where am I—in Heaven, or in the Other Place?' (Great laughter.)

The action is advanced another stage by the arrival of the undertaker to measure Guzzle for his coffin. The undertaker, you see without any wonder whatever, is no other than Mrs. Guzzle. Assisted by Sloppy they lay out Mr. Guzzle on a

sofa—Guzzle keeps on protesting he is not dead, but that makes no difference—and measure him. 'He 's the sort o' size,' says the pretty undertaker, otherwise the superior shop-assistant, otherwise Mrs. Guzzle, with business-like grasp of the situation and of Peter, 'that we keep in stock. I'll send the coffin round at once. He'll look pretty well laid out.' (Peter groans.) But, hold, something has been forgotten. Peter died suddenly, it seems, and the circumstances are a little suspicious. It is necessary, therefore, that there shall be an inquest by the coroner—Peter will have to be 'opened up.' (Loud and long-continued shrieks from Peter: 'Cut up! Opened up! I won't be cut up! I won't be opened up! I'm not dead! O! what a bad dream! What an awful nightmare!') Then Sloppy and the undertaker talk about the 'dear departed.' Sloppy tells him that her master was a good 'usband to missus until he took to bettin' and drinkin'. Well, Guzzle was dead now ('I must be dead!' cries Guzzle, with sudden conviction), and missus would soon console herself—'A 'andsome woman like 'er won't have to wear the willer long.' (Peter groans dismally.) Exit undertaker, promising to send the coffin at once.

Guzzle and the undertaker.

Meanwhile there is a noise outside, and Sloppy remarks that must be the coroner come to hold the inquest, and he must be sharpening up his instruments to 'open up mahster.' (Peter shrieks, howls, kicks, tears his hair—the audience shouting with

inextinguishable laughter the while.) But the coroner never comes upon the stage; instead of him enter the Devil to take Peter off to the Other Place. (The Devil, you will notice, has on this occasion a trim female figure—in fact, that of Mrs. Guzzle.) The Devil is too much for Peter, and he (Peter) goes off into a fit. When he comes out of it, his wife and Sloppy are by his side. He tells them he's had a frightful nightmare, but that, thank goodness, it was nothing else. 'Do you know,' he says confidingly, 'I dreamt I was dead, and that the undertaker came to measure me for my coffin, and that there was to be an inquest, and that I was to be opened up, and that the Devil—but it was all a bad dream! Well, my dear, it's taught me a lesson. I'll never bet or go to the Pig and Whistle again.' Brother Lynn and the two Sisters Lynn now join hands, while the crowd rocks and reels with tumultuous cheers, hand-clappings, and cat-calls. The Lynn Family, or Guzzle Family, as you like it, has scored a huge and gorgeous success!

The Devil.

To them succeed acrobats, who appear to think that jumping in and out of barrels, blindfolded, is quite a usual way of 'getting around,'—but by this time you have seen enough. You abandon your fauteuil, get out of the smoke-laden, beer-stained atmosphere, and pass out into the street.

CHAPTER VIII

EARL'S COURT

'Gauntlet . . . therefore proposed to pass part of the evening at the public entertainments in Marylebone Gardens, which were at that time frequented by the best company in town.'

SMOLLETT, *Peregrine Pickle.*

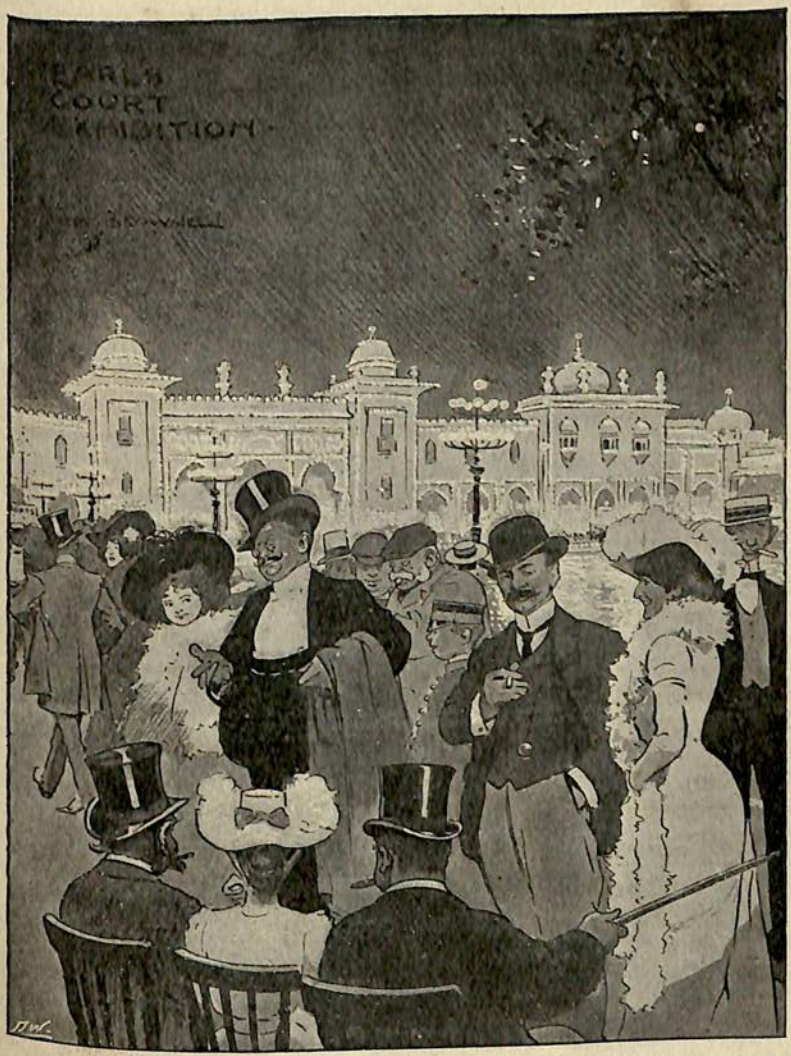
THE congeries of shows, entertainments, shops, and exhibitions of one sort or another, compendiously known as Earl's Court, is a prominent feature of the Night Side of London from May to October. In some measure it may be regarded as a descendant of those 'public entertainments' to which Smollett referred in the last chapter of the evergreen *Peregrine Pickle*, and which is quoted above. Another of its prototypes was famous Vauxhall, and another, nearer our own time, Cremorne. It may be doubted, however, if any of these places, not excepting Vauxhall, approached Earl's Court in size, or splendour, or popularity, or afforded anything like the same variety. Earl's Court can scarcely be said to have a rival at present. But when Cremorne was at the height of its vogue, it had competitors in North Woolwich Gardens and Highbury Barn. The Crystal Palace does not draw the crowd as does Earl's Court, nor does

A unique place.

the Aquarium, in spite of its boast that at no other place can so many shows be seen. The vast extent of Earl's Court, the diversity of the attractions of all kinds it furnishes, the picturesqueness of its grounds, its myriads of coloured lights, its magnificent music, and other things, have given it a unique place in the life of the town. Of a summer's evening there is no more agreeable lounge to be found anywhere, nor is there anything at all like it in any other city of the world. It seems strange that there is not something of the sort in Paris, but there is not.

Earl's Court is by way of combining instruction with amusement. It calls itself primarily an Exhibition—Earl's Court Exhibition. Each year there is a different Exhibition. One year the subject, so to speak, was the Empire of India; in another, the Victorian Era; in a third, Greater Britain; last year there was a Military Exhibition; this year (1902) there is a Coronation Exhibition—a name, rather curiously, which covers a reproduction of the Paris Exposition of last year. It is difficult to institute any comparison between these various exhibitions, but the feature which has been common to them all is what may be called the spectacular. The Director-General of Earl's Court (a native of Buda-Pest) is a man who has the veritable Oriental love of gorgeous display and sensuous magnificence. He has a positive genius for contriving a great spectacle. To his native

On exhibitions.


EARLS
COURT
EXHIBITION

fondness for it he adds a wide experience gained in the United States, particularly at the World's Fair in Chicago, where his spectacle of 'America' is said to have had the biggest artistic and financial success of any show in history. He is at his best, however, when he is doing something relating to the East—as, for instance, in his Exhibition of India, with its prodigality of types, its vivid contrasts, its blazing colours, he fairly revelled in producing striking and even extraordinary effects. It will perhaps be asked if any one learns much, or even a little, from these exhibitions. It does not answer the question, but there is very small doubt that not one in a thousand goes to Earl's Court to get knowledge or information. Yet knowledge and information are there—if anybody wants 'em; but people hate being 'informed'—they go to Earl's Court to be amused, to see the Show, to talk, to hear the music, to flirt, to 'pick something up' (not necessarily information).

Earl's Court is open all day long, but it is in the evening when most people go there. And it is in the evening that you had better go, though you will not find one evening enough to take it all in. If you go during the daytime you will see far too well how the effects are obtained; night throws mystery and illusion over the scene, which are enhanced rather than dispelled by the multitudinous coloured lights. Perhaps you are too blasé to have any other feeling than that you are looking on at an unusually big pantomime; if, however, this is not the case, you

may be inclined to sympathise with the little country cousin who says enthusiastically that it is 'like fairy-land.' And the particular entrance to the Exhibition which is most likely to help you to this point of view is that in Earl's Court Road. For there, when you have paid your shilling, and passed within the turnstiles, you soon come upon the most fairy-like place in the whole Show. Here in the centre is a lake, and round its edge run these coloured lamps, whose gleams are reflected by the water. At one end is a grotto; in the midst of it is a bridge; along it glide swans that turn out to be small electric launches. At one side of it there stands a Canadian water-chute, down the slope of which sweep, with what seems terrific speed, flat-bottomed boats into the lake. The people in these boats generally diversify the proceedings by doing a little shouting and screaming, but as a matter of fact they are as safe in these canoes or skiffs as if they were on shore. From beyond the bridge comes the music of a band. Round the lake there runs a 'Chinese dragon' railway. Past the bridge, on the left side, is a covered building con-

Fairy-land.

taining exhibits of divers kinds; on the right is another, also full of 'things.' It is by passing through the building on the left that you reach a bridge which takes you over the tops of some houses to a flight of stairs, passing down which you go into another part, where are the theatre, picture-gallery, and other places of interest or entertainment.

Opposite the theatre is the gateway into a large and handsome square, which is lined with shops and booths of all kinds. In the centre is the inevitable bandstand, and about it are chairs for those disposed to sit and listen to the band. This is perhaps the quietest part of Earl's Court, and if you love music more than shows this is the spot for you. At the far end of the square is another gateway, on the further side of which you will find more shows—mostly of the side-show variety, but generally with some relation to the special exhibition being held. Thus, in the India Exhibition there were shows in this part of the place of Indian jugglers, musicians, serpent-charmers, and the like. Beyond these shows you will come to what has long been the most striking feature of Earl's Court—the Big Wheel. But on

the Big Wheel sentence has been passed; it does not draw the crowd as it formerly did, and something new must take its place. And yet it seems rather a pity, for by day you could get from the top of it the finest view of London, and at night there was to be seen a strange and curious night-light picture of part of London—especially of the grounds of Earl's Court itself—which was certainly very attractive. But the public have lost interest in it; it is played out, and it must go. What will become of it? It is not the sort of thing that can easily drop out of sight. Well, if you have not yet been 'up' in the Big Wheel, you should make a point of going—if for no other object than to see how Earl's Court looks from "'way up there.' Should it be your luck that the Wheel sticks on your trip, and you have to spend a few hours in one of the carriages (this has happened to other people more than once), why, then, the management will see that you don't lose by it.

The Big Wheel.

From the Big Wheel you go on through some gardens to yet another square, with of course another bandstand in the midst thereof. Before you arrive in this square you will notice, as you walk along, that on one side is a 'roller-coaster' or

switchback, and as the cars thunder up and down the thing, you will hear the laughter and shrieks of the passengers mixed with the noise. But the fickle public are not so keen on the switchback as they used to be, and the cars do not run with any remarkable frequency. But now you are in this third and last square. In some respects it is the most important, for here is the great dining-hall, where you may dine with some sumptuousness, or, if you happen to be a member of the Welcome Club, whose abode is also in this part of Earl's Court, you may have your dinner there—afterward sitting out for your coffee and liqueurs within the Club enclosure, which forms one side of this square. The Welcome Club has quite a large number of members, drawn from all parts of the town, but naturally it is most generally patronised by those living in the immediate neighbourhood. The Club is closely connected with the Exhibition, and of course is shut up when Earl's Court is closed. The Welcome Club is, you might say, the loungiest lounge in the place. And in addition to the Welcome Club, and the dining-room, and the bandstand, there are in this square a theatre, and a diorama, and the entrance to a covered way, which leads you, through an avenue of shops, to that point in your journey from which you started on leaving the lake. Well, you will have heard some fine music, and seen some strange sights, to say nothing of beholding an enormous number of people. The last-

The Welcome Club.

named hold pretty well as many types and characters as are to be found in London, whether in its drawing-rooms or in its streets. And the study of types and characters is always interesting—when not too personally conducted. *Verb. sap.*

CHAPTER IX

THE MASKED-BALL

'The midnight masquerade.'—GOLDSMITH.
'Adventures are to the adventurous.'—DISRAELI.

THERE were times when the masked-ball was one of the great features of the Night Side of London, but it can scarcely be said to be a great feature of it now. The public masquerade, the masked-ball, the 'ridotto' (as it was named at the beginning of the eighteenth century, so as to shock public sentiment less), the *bal-masqué*, came to England in the time of that gay dog, Charles II. It flourished more or less in the days when George the First was king, but in 1723 it was put down by a discerning government. However, it did not long remain suppressed, and historic Vauxhall was the scene of many a lively masquerade. Vauxhall had its day (and its night too), and passed away. Forty or fifty years ago the masked-ball came into fashion again. From a book written at that time, it seems that masked-balls were held at the Holborn Casino (the Holborn Restaurant replaced it later), at Covent Garden, at the Alhambra, at Highbury

Old-time masked-balls.

Barn, and at Drury Lane—and they don't appear to have differed very strikingly from those of the present period, such as you will behold in the winter at Covent Garden. Masked-balls fell into bad odour, and almost or altogether ceased in London. Some ten years ago or so they were revived at Covent Garden. From October to the commencement of the Opera season there is a ball once a fortnight. Suppose you take one in?

Now for a night of 'fun'! You may have dined at the Continental—if so, it is quite on the cards that some of the ladies you may have seen there will be present later at Covent Garden—or elsewhere. You perhaps took a look in at the Empire or the Alhambra, or at some other music-hall, by way of passing the time. For, although the ball is advertised to begin before eleven, the dancers do not arrive in any numbers till after midnight. So you, too, will not care to reach the theatre much sooner.

Present-day version.

You can go masked if you like; you may don a domino or some fancy-dress costume; you may go in evening-dress simply—these are matters, you will find, that are left to yourself. Very much so, in fact, for you will see, by and by, that dancers will be at the ball who haven't even put on evening-dress, but who have hidden their morning attire under a domino. Well, about twelve you get into a hansom. Perhaps you are with a friend; if not, you will have no trouble in picking up one, if you want to, in the ballroom. It

may be that this is the first Covent Garden ball you have 'assisted' at, and when you have alighted from your cab, curiosity makes you stand in the vestibule or hall, just inside the door, and watch the people coming in. In some respects this, you may find, is not the least interesting part of the entertainment.

You take your stand near the door by which admittance is gained into the ballroom. On your right are the steps up to the boxes, where also is the ladies' dressing-room. Here, then, in the hall you will be able to observe the fair creatures as they arrive, and before they have finally arrayed themselves for conquest. On your right also is an office where you can get 'masks, dominoes, gloves'—as you hear from some one who shouts out the information from within. To your left is a pay-box, and opposite it is another. There is also a gentleman's cloak-room. The price of admission to the ballroom is a guinea, but if you merely wish to look on, you can get a seat in the gallery for a few shillings. If you desire to be very extravagant, you can treat yourself to a box, but that will run you into several guineas. Suppose you pay your guinea. If you intend to stand in the hall some minutes watching the people come in, you will feel more comfortable if you pay at once. For a few paces from you there is a sergeant of police from Bow Street (which is just across the way) and also an ordinary constable, and they are sure to

Who plays, pays.

turn a very keen eye on you if they see you loitering here. But if you have a ticket, you can defy them with the explanation that you are waiting for a friend.

For half an hour you have seen, let us say, thirty or forty people step into the vestibule. Sometimes they have come in couples, a man and a woman; again, it may be, that two or three ladies, *sans cavaliers*, put in an appearance, or two or three young men without any ladies. When a man and a woman come in together, you may observe that the lady is nearly always in a mask. When the ladies come in by themselves (generally without pretence at any disguise) you notice that they stand about in the hall for some time. If you spy on them closely, you may or may not be surprised (it will depend on your knowledge of life) to see that these ladies are reduced to the unpleasantness of buying their own tickets. Should your sense of gallantry carry you so far as to cause you to desire to be their banker, you will find astonishingly few obstacles placed in your way; on the contrary, every encouragement will be smiled upon you. But imagine you do not succumb to the temptation—you are not yet tired of watching. You turn to the group of young men who have just got down from a pair of hansoms. They are very, very young; youth, and the high spirits of youth, are written large upon them; they are a little flushed, a little noisy, a little easy in their gestures.

'On the threshold.'

Older men come in too; one—as likely as not—or two are old enough to be the fathers of the youngsters you have had your eyes on a moment ago.

About half-past twelve, and on until half-past one o'clock, there is a great quickening, a rush. People begin and continue to arrive in large and small parties, and for an hour the vestibule is crowded with fresh arrivals. Indeed, it is so full that you may find yourself in the way. So in a few minutes you give up your ticket and pass through the door, and, before ascending the stairs that lead you up to the ballroom, you take a look around. Here, in the corridor or hallway, there is a bar, served by maids adorned with ribbons of red, white, and blue. Beyond are small tables 'built for two,' and you note that they are well (well, in more senses than one) occupied. As you glance, you see couples merrily supping, and you hear the suggestive popping of corks and the fizzle of champagne in the glass. Some of those at the bar and at the supper-tables have their masks on, but the majority, the great majority, are disguised (the joke is something of the most ancient) as ladies and gentlemen. You begin to take in the fact that a very small proportion of the dancers wear masks, and that though a considerable percentage of the ladies are in fancy dress, a still larger are not. The authorities of the place, to encourage the use of fancy dress, give prizes, quite valuable ones too, for the best costumes, and you may be inclined

At supper.

to suspect that were it not for these inducements fancy dress would be at a greater discount than it is.

But all this while music, delicious music, the music of one of the best bands in England, for, probably enough, it is Dan Godfrey's, has been sounding in your ears, and, besides, you can hardly fail to hear the tap, tap, tapping of little heels and lesser toes on the floor, and the swish or rustle of silken skirts. A picture is conjured up with you, and you proceed to verify it. So you ascend the steps, and presently you are in one of the handsomest ballrooms in the world. All the stalls and seats in the immense amphitheatre have been removed, with the result that there is a splendid floor-surface for the tripping of the light fantastic. The floor is highly polished, too, and is in capital condition. The place is brilliantly lighted up, and above the bandstand is a pretty arrangement of coloured lights in festoons from the ceiling, which have a really charming effect. Perhaps as you enter there is a pause between the dances, and this gives you a chance to see what the place is like. Your glance sweeps round the magnificent room, and you note that there are hundreds of dancers. You also see that many of the boxes are full, though it may be there are more empty ones. If it is the first night of the masked-ball season, all or nearly all of them will be occupied—so, also, on the last. Programme in hand, you make your way across the floor. The next dance is the Lancers,

The ballroom.

and you secure a place near the band, from which you will be able to get a good view of the scene. The conductor raises his baton, and the band strikes up. The piece they play, and it is played to admiration, is a medley of light operatic airs, taken from a popular musical comedy of the day.

The dancers quickly form up on the floor, and they lose no time in getting to work. Unquestionably, it is a merry scene—bright, sparkling, picturesque, but its main feature is that of a sportive and not easily discouraged jollity. There is a good deal of cheerful noise. In some sets the dance is rendered to perfection. And why not? For amongst the men and women are some of the best performers in London. As the dance proceeds each and all abandon themselves more and more to the gay suggestion of the music, and there is less and less of the orthodox drawing-room style of dancing to be seen. Here a man dressed as a monk catches up his partner in his arms, and holding her aloft waltzes 'around,' as the Americans phrase it. Another man, in ordinary evening-dress, follows his example—there is much laughter, for in another moment he and his partner are sprawling on the floor. They pick themselves up, and there is more laughter. Some of the ladies indulge in a little 'high kicking,' and you have seductive glimpses of flashing, shapely, silk-stockinged legs. And all over the immense floor much the same kind of thing is going on, but to get a perfect view you must go

A dance.

up to one of the boxes. And thither you ascend, and then look down.

Again you will undoubtedly conclude that the scene is a gay and festive one; it is full of bright colour, of rhythmical movement. You scan the various sets, and you make a catalogue of the costumes. Here is a 'Type of English Beauty,' there a 'Shepherdess'; here 'Pierrot' and 'Pierrette,' there the 'Queen of Hearts' with the 'Knave'; here is the 'Emerald Isle' in green and gold, there a 'Chinaman'; here a 'Courtier of Louis XIV.,' there a 'Page of Charles II.'; here is 'Goosey, Goosey Gander,' there a fat 'Romeo' along with an amiable-looking 'Lady Macbeth'; over yonder 'Mephisto' has a 'Hallelujah Lassie' in his arms. And so on. You have no doubt been at other fancy-dress balls, and you recognise in the costumes a large number of old friends. Amongst the dancers are a few in dominoes and a smaller band in masks. And as the night lengthens out nearly all the masks are removed. Your lightly roving eye tells you that there are many pretty women here; one or two of them are positively beautiful. And there are plenty of handsome, good-looking men. They all seem to be happy and in high spirits. All appear to be having a 'high old time.' And of course that is exactly what they are here for. Black care, for a few hours at least, has ceased to sit behind the horsemen, so to say. While you look on, the music comes to an end. And now

The scene from the boxes.

THE DANCERS QUICKLY FORM UP ON THE FLOOR.

you notice there is a fresh excitement in the place. Those who have entered for the prizes given for the best costumes now submit themselves to the verdict of the judges. The dancers form a living lane, and up this the contestants walk, amidst the freest of criticisms and no little banter and chaff, to the band-stand, whereon are the judges. This function is soon over. You hear presently that the young lady who represented 'Goosey, Goosey Gander,' or 'The Spider and the Fly,' or 'The Whisper of the Shell,' as the case may be, has been awarded the first prize, and you can guess without being told how much she is envied by her less fortunate sisters.

And now you ask yourself the impertinent question, Who are all these people, these votaries of pleasure? Exactly, you tell yourself, that is who and what they are — the votaries of pleasure. Amongst the men are officers of the army, men from the Stock Exchange, actors, journalists, betting men, men about town, young 'bloods,' and hosts of men who can only be described as nondescripts, except that they are all bent on seeing life and resolved to quaff the purple cup to the dregs. They are all, you may be sure, labelled 'fast,' but for all that most of them are good fellows enough, and it would be a pretty big mistake to suppose they are all travelling post-haste on the highroad to Hades. And the ladies—well, who are they, and where do they come from? You have seen what you have seen as you were

The dancers.

standing in the hall, and you must have your own opinion. Certainly, as the night wears on you will not have two opinions. The ladies for the most part belong to the Half-World, but there! you knew that before. Still, if you have ever been to a *bal-masqué* in Paris, and compare it with the Covent Garden variety, you will acknowledge that the standard of conduct is higher in England than in France. Here there are ushers, masters of ceremonies, attendants, to say nothing of the police in the background of the whole entertainment, and they take care that a certain appearance of decorum is maintained.

Another dance succeeds the procession of those trying for the prizes; this time it is a barn-dance. The music is sprightly and catchy, and every one seems to enter into the fun and enjoyment of the thing with the utmost zest. Certainly, it is a gay and attractive picture—the pretty women, the young, handsome men, the dresses, the lights, the big ballroom. There is the measured beat, beat, beat of dancing feet to the lively time, and there is a sound of laughter and merriment in the pulsing air. And so, again, in the next dance—a polka, danced in ten or twenty different styles, but each and all with frank abandon. It is now getting on in the night, or rather morning, and each successive dance is a shade more noisy, its 'time' a bit quicker, than its predecessor. There is something infectious in the scene, and tired of being a mere onlooker you descend from the box and mingle with the people on

the floor. Then comes the 'Cake Walk'—now all the vogue. But first you take a look at the men and women sitting and lounging about on the seats and benches at the side of the ball-room. Most of them are in pairs, though here and there a nymph sits lonely and disconsolate. Some of these people are evidently having a good time; others seem tired and bored. It is much the same, however, at the Duchess of Blankshire's ball, where you have seen how pleasure and ennui, joy and satiety meet together and sit side by side. 'Tis for ever the same old human comedy-tragedy! And now you manage to push your way through the crowd standing looking on at the dancers. You reach the bandstand just as the last strains of the polka die away, and you are caught up by the rush of dancers all making for the refreshment-tables, most of which are situated behind the bandstand or downstairs in the corridor you saw as you came in.

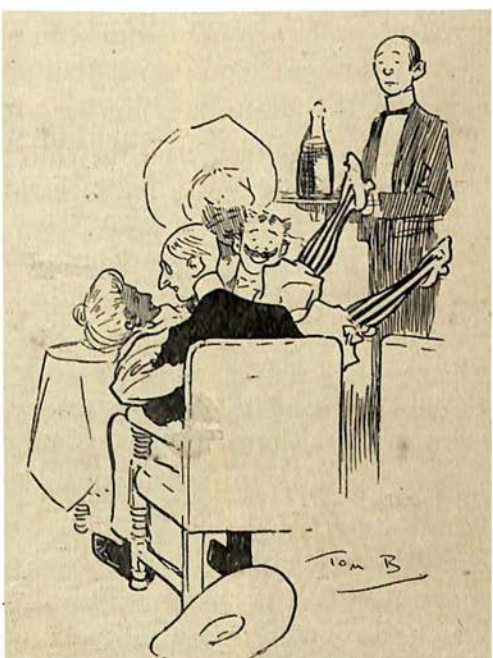
On the floor.

You too take a seat behind the bandstand, and call for what you will. The waiters are in great demand, and probably you may have to wait some time before you are served. So you gaze about you, and you instantly perceive that here you are, in a sense at any rate, 'behind the scenes.' There are perhaps seventy or eighty people at the various tables, in twos or in larger parties. Fair faces are a trifle flushed; painted cheeks incline to look the least bit haggard; some of the voices are more than

common shrill. Here and there you listen to some half-hysterical laughter. And yet it is a fairly orderly crowd—indeed, remarkably so, considering all that has been going on. There is a long bar, and behind it are waitresses (they look tired to death, as no doubt they are, poor things, for they have been standing there for hours), dressed like the others in red, white, and blue. In front of it are men and women two or three deep. And now, as you look, you see something. There is the fat monk whom you have observed earlier in the evening, and lo! the cord which bound his capacious waist (?) is removed by a lady, and in a few seconds a skipping-rope is at work, and first one, then three or four damsels are skipping, skipping for all they are worth, their skirts tucked up or gathered up around them, so that you see their stockings and other articles of attire—which you do not generally see; let us put it in that way, and leave something to the imagination. But this phase of the ball does not last long—if you are quite human it is just

Behind the scenes.

possible you think it does not last long enough. An attendant comes up and confiscates the skipping-rope! You turn away, and now something else meets your view. Just under the palm in a corner is a little party—a merry little party it is. There are two girls got up as 'coons,' and they are dressed in the white 'pants' and the sailor-like upper garment you see in the music-halls. There are two men with them; there is a running fire of chaff, and in a twinkling one of the coons is taken up from the floor and deposited in the lap of one of the men. He proceeds to 'cuddle' her in the most unblushing manner, a process which appears to meet with her entire approval. An attendant passes by, but he does not see, or he pretends not to see, and the coon remains in the arms of her lover—is he her lover? Well, perhaps he is; at any rate, that is the character in which he chooses to appear at the ball



COVENT GARDEN BALL GIRLS.

behind the scenes! And there are other equally suggestive pictures to be witnessed here.

The night is getting older; dance succeeds dance, and then comes the distribution of the prizes to the successful contestants. It may be that people are getting rather tired of the whole thing, for it is now past four o'clock, and the giving of the prizes causes little or no excitement. Then there are more dances; with some, hilarity is at its height! *Vive la bagatelle, vive la joie!* At five o'clock there is a last dance, and the thing comes to an end with 'God save the King!' You get your wraps, and then you think of breakfast, or 'something to eat.' Covent Garden is near, and you know that its early market-folk were there with their flowers and fruit and vegetables two or three hours ago, and you also know that there are several places of 'entertainment for man and beast' open. To the most famous of them all you wend your way, in company with some other revellers of the night. You come on a breakfast-room, where you can have kidneys and bacon or some other dish. And here you see the last of the masked-ball. You sit down at table, and your *vis-à-vis* is a young lady dressed as a vivandière, and beside her is a Spanish dancer. Not far off is a young gentleman, and you notice he has enjoyed the ball not wisely but too

LAST WALTZ.

After the ball—breakfast.

well. And the talk you listen to is not particularly edifying! But everything comes to an end. Finally, you get into your cab and drive away. If you are wise you drive away alone or with a male friend. 'Dinna forget.'

CHAPTER X

THE SHILLING HOP

'. . . This manly, masterful seizure by the waist, this lifting almost off the feet, this whirl round and round to the music. . . .

BESANT, *All Sorts and Conditions of Men.*

ONE of the pleasantest and at the same time most wholesome features of the Night Side of London is the Shilling Hop. Some forty or fifty years ago London was surrounded with places where dancing was carried on, and for the most part these were open-air places; but they have pretty well disappeared. You will see on Bank Holidays 'Arry and 'Arriet dancing on Hampstead Heath, at the Crystal Palace, at Alexandra Park, and elsewhere, just as you will see children and young girls dancing in the streets to the music of the organ-grinders. But it is at the Shilling Hops, held in various parts of the town, that you will behold the most genuine devotion to the dance. At one hall alone, Holborn Town Hall, there are three of these 'Cinderellas' every week during the winter, and many hundreds of people take part in each of them. Of course, these

Holborn Town Hall.

modest entertainments are very different from the great organised balls, of which there are a vast number given every winter—and also in the 'Season': balls national, such as that known as the Caledonian held at the Whitehall Rooms, where royalty has been known to appear in Highland costume, or like that given at the German Gymnasium in St. Pancras Road, or balls given by clubs and societies and 'Orders.' These Shilling Hops are quite informal, quite humble in comparison with even the least conspicuous of these affairs, but for all that you see some of the very best dancing in London at them. Here are none of the fastidious men, the despair of hostesses, who can't or won't dance.

You shall go to one at Holborn Town Hall; it may be on a Monday, Thursday, or Saturday evening, just as it suits you, for there is a Shilling Hop every week on each of these evenings, or very nearly so, all through the long winter months. As you enter you pay your shilling to a young lady, who probably is a daughter of the Professor of Dancing under whose auspices the Hop is given. You receive a card of admittance, on one side of which is the programme of the dances. As you glance over it you see the programme, so far as the dances are concerned, is not very different from that you held in your hand at the Duchess of Blankshire's famous ball; there is much the same procession or alternation of waltz, lancers, waltz, barn-dance, waltz, as

there was at her Grace's big dance. You pass up the uncarpeted stairs. You arrive during one of the intervals between the dances, and the hall at the top of the stairs is crowded with young men and maidens. You don't notice many elderly people amongst them —there are a few, and you rather wonder what they are doing there. (And there are no chaperons at these Hops.) You observe that with the exception of two or three the girls have made no attempt to appear in 'evening-dress.' The only man in regulation war-paint is the Professor of Dancing, who gives the Hop and, as you see presently, acts as the master of ceremonies at it. In fact, nearly everybody is dressed in his or her 'Sunday best.' On your left is the entrance into the hall; in front of you is the indispensable refreshment-room. While you are gazing about you, the band within the hall strikes up—it is the insinuating music of an old favourite waltz of Strauss's, and the people press in, but without rudeness or scrambling, into the dancing-room. And you pass in too.

On the landing.

Holborn Town Hall is a noble room for dancing in, or for anything else. And on this particular evening its polished floor gleams like ice. At one end is a platform, on which is an organ; at the far end is a gallery, bare of people. Immediately in front of the organ is the band; it counts some seven or eight instruments, and they who perform on them are dressed—well, not exactly like the mem-

bers of the Blue Hungarian or Red Rumanian Bands. One or two are in a uniform of sorts, two or three are in evening attire (also of sorts), the rest are in 'lounge' suits. But the dress doesn't matter; it is the music—but, alas! that might be better. As the music sounds the floor of the hall is covered in a twinkling with dancers. You watch them, and you notice that as a rule they dance excellently well, but their enjoyment is of the most sober, decorous kind. The great majority, you can hardly fail to see without a smile, regard dancing as a very serious business—a thing not lightly to be undertaken, but with all gravity. You have an amused sense that every one is determined to get the fullest possible value for his or her shilling. But they do dance well. Here you shall see two hundred couples on the floor waltzing, and you shall entirely fail to observe a young man trampling on his partner's toes, or a pair wildly careering amongst, blindly cannoning against, inoffensive and defenceless people. You ask yourself, with your usual impertinence, who they all are, and the answer is not far to seek. They are—at least most of them—from the ranks of the exceeding great army of shop-assistants, and the biggest battalions are drawn from what our American cousins call 'dry-goods stores.' And if the sight they present is not exactly gay, it is at any rate a pleasant sight—a sight which would have delighted the heart of the great novelist and good man who wrote *All*

A grave dance.

Sorts and Conditions of Men, and who gave East London its 'People's Palace.'

The waltz over, the dancers flock away to the refreshment-room. The Professor of Dancing, meanwhile, has spotted you, and he comes up, bows, and inquires if he may get you a partner. You enter into conversation with him, and congratulate him on the success of the Hop. He replies that sometimes he has much larger affairs. He tells you that he has Shilling Hops on the other side of the river, which are perhaps much bigger. He descants on the finer aspects of the thing—how these Shilling Hops are looked forward to by many a young girl, many a young fellow, as the brightest spots in their lives. He assures you that these Hops make for manliness and a wholesome pride—are not pupils of his now soldiers of the King in South Africa and elsewhere? 'Here,' he says, 'a man sees many young ladies, and if he takes a fancy for one—you may be sure he has many competitors; he has to take pains with himself and his appearance; he has to show what he's worth to win her; it's a very good thing for both.' Quite so, you agree. Then his talk drifts off to other dances in the town, and he institutes comparisons between these and his own Hops—greatly in favour of the latter, you may be sure. And perhaps not without reason. 'The Cake Walk,' he goes on, 'is all the rage now. Would you like to see one?' And he announces in a loud tone that the Cake Walk will

The 'Professor' talks.

BALL
BALL
THE · CAKE-WALK ·
AT · A · SAILING · HOP ·
HOLBORN
TOWN · HALL ·
TOM BROWNE

be interpolated between the next two dances on the list. First comes the Lancers—danced with the utmost correctness and a feeling for the niceties of deportment which would have satisfied even the immortal Turveydrop. And then follows the Cake Walk. But this is not a huge success. Perhaps it is because there is so much abandon about it—because it is so complete a caricature of Turveydropism—but the Shilling Hoppers do not take to it kindly. They do ever so much better in their grave, severely serious waltzes; truth to say, they take their pleasures a trifle sadly.

CHAPTER XI

CLUB LIFE

'I was detained at the Club.'—Any husband to any wife (Old Style).

LONDON is pre-eminently the city of clubs. In it there are at least fifty of well-established position, as many more of greater or less pretensions to social standing, and a multitude besides, the status of which is 'special' or 'peculiar.' An ingenious American, fond of the statistical side of life, has calculated that the 'recognised' London clubs have a membership of upwards of 100,000. Clubs of one kind or another are now to be found all over the town, but to all intents and purposes they may be said to be pretty well confined to Pall Mall, St. James's, and Piccadilly. On the extreme western boundary you shall find the Bachelors', at the corner of Hamilton Place, and the Wellington, at the top of Grosvenor Place. Leaving out of view the City clubs, you may say that the Senior forms the eastern boundary; but this is hardly correct, for such a statement fails to take into account a host of clubs, such as the Union,

Where found.

the National Liberal, and the other clubs in Whitehall Court, the Constitutional, the Garrick, the Savage, the Green Room, the National Sporting, the Victoria, the Writers', and the Press, which all lie further east. If you will look at any list of clubs for this year of grace, 1902, you can count about a hundred and twenty-five for gentlemen, and a dozen for ladies. A century ago there were no clubs for ladies, and very few for gentlemen. The rise of clubs is distinctly a feature of the nineteenth century. But though the beginning of the twentieth century sees more clubs in London than ever before, the rise of the restaurants, so conspicuous a feature of present-day London life, has profoundly modified the Night Side of club life. The club-man of seventy or eighty years ago, who spent most of his evenings in his club dining, gaming, drinking, gossiping, were he to come to life again and revisit

A SKETCH AT THE PRESS CLUB.

his former haunt at his accustomed time o' night, would more probably than not find it almost empty. And were he to be told that clubs are most populous —indeed, only populous—at the hour sacred to afternoon tea, he would not believe it, or if he did he would get himself back in immitigable disgust to the shades again.

Some of the older clubs, as you may see from the famous book at Brooks's, wherein are recorded the bets of its members in days long bygone, were gambling-clubs and nothing else. In St. James's Street you can find the Cocoa Tree, whose name recalls the ancient seat of gaming, and hard by is the Thatched House, built on the site of a once celebrated tavern of the same appellation. And here it may be noted that the London clubs, the progenitors of the modern clubs, grew out of the London taverns. A hundred and fifty years ago men spent their evenings in the taverns of the town—one of the best-known to the bucks of the time being the Thatched House aforesaid; another was the Bedford in Covent Garden, of which you may read in the veracious pages of Smollett. Perhaps White's is the oldest of London clubs—you will find a good deal about it in Thackeray, who laid several scenes in his novels there. In former days play ran high and was not unattended with bad blood—some of which was 'let' in duels in the Park. How degenerate would the clubs of to-day, with their devotion

Clubs grew out of taverns.

to afternoon tea, appear to the men of that period!

In the story of last century political clubs played a great part. Over against each other (in history as in the street) stand the Carlton and the Reform. Of the interior of the former you can see nothing unless you are a member, for no stranger is allowed to dine there or even enter its rooms. But then 'tis whispered that a dinner at the Carlton Club is not a joy for ever. The Reform, true to its principles, is liberal, for it does admit the stranger within its gates, and there, should a member invite you, you may dine very well. And perhaps the member of the Reform with whom you dine will not forget to tell you that they have a better chef than there is across the road. Brooks's at one time was the great Liberal, or rather Whig, club, but though the Carlton and the Reform still remain the chief political clubs, there are now many others. As for example, there are the Conservative, the Junior Carlton, the Constitutional, the Junior Constitutional, the Junior Conservative, the St. Stephen's, on the one side of politics, and on the other the Devonshire (which, however, is now more of the 'social' type than of the 'political'), the Eighty, the National Liberal, and the New Reform.

Clubs political.

Considerable gatherings of members are to be seen at nearly all of these clubs, except when Parliament is sitting, in the afternoons, and again on special nights during the year when there is 'anything on.' A few of these political clubs have members who are not politicians first, last, and all the time; the Reform has several men of letters on its roll at present; in the past it had Macaulay and Thackeray. The Eighty is 'addressed' periodically by leading lights of the Liberal party. A large number of journalists belong to the younger political clubs. Some of these political clubs are aristocratic, others are as distinctly of the middle class. But whether a politician is Conservative or Liberal, an aristocrat or of the middle class, he rarely dines at his club; hardly ever does he invite guests to dine with him at 'the Club'; he prefers to show his hospitality either at his own house, or, vicariously, as it might be put, at a restaurant.

This is perhaps not quite so much the case at the Service clubs. The veteran has not taken with as much enthusiasm to dining at the restaurant as has his junior, but still, even the most old-fashioned of the Service clubs is more or less deserted in the evenings. It is at lunch and in the afternoons that you shall see many distinguished officers, both naval and military, at such clubs as the United Service, called by the frivolous the Cripples' Home, but spoken of as the Senior by the more sober-minded, the Army and Navy,

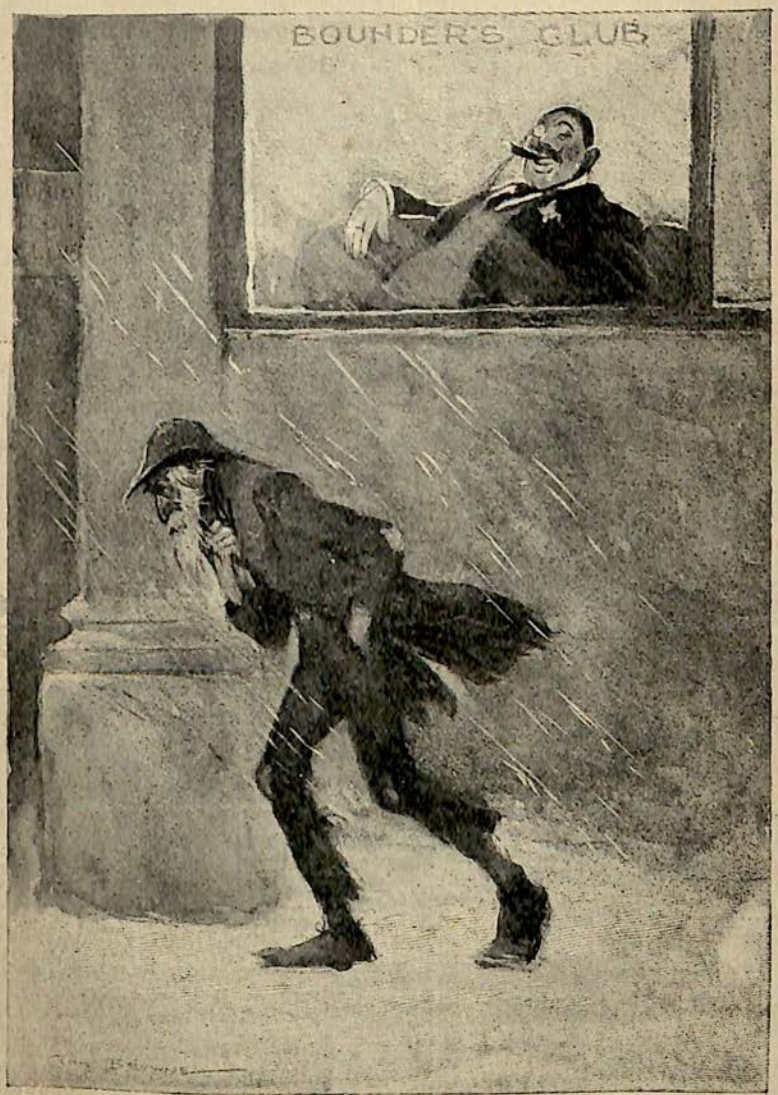
Clubs naval and military.

otherwise known as the Rag, the Naval and Military, which has its abode in the house formerly occupied by Lord Palmerston, and the scene of Lady Palmerston's once celebrated 'Saturdays,' the East India United Service, the Junior Army and Navy, and the Junior Naval and Military. Some of the Service clubs are devoted to special branches of the military profession—such as the Cavalry and the Guards'; the former is in Piccadilly, the latter in Pall Mall. But of course many of the members of the Service clubs belong to other clubs, and, also of course, officers who are on duty in London have their own mess. It may be of interest to state that at least in one case (that of the Household Cavalry) the members of the mess sit down to dinner in ordinary evening-dress — this has the advantage of allowing these gentlemen to go into society without having to 'change.'

There are in London an immense number of clubs devoted to sport in one form or another. You can begin with the Alpine and go on to the Victoria. All kinds of sports and all forms of sport you shall find have club-houses—mountaineering, automobilism, coaching, athletics and swimming, chess, photography, fly-fishing, golf, pigeon-shooting, polo, cricket, rowing, rackets, skating, yachting. In this class you may include such a club as the Travellers'—its

house is in Pall Mall, and it is one of the most exclusive in the town. In Piccadilly is the Turf Club, the most fashionable of all the sporting-clubs, and a centre of interest for the horse-racing world. Two or three of the sports-clubs go in for sports all round, and a few of the social clubs add something connected with sports or sporting to their ordinary programmes. The club which calls itself, and is, *par excellence, the* National Sporting Club is treated of in a separate article which will be found further on in this book. On certain afternoons and evenings this club has competitions and contests. There are one or two of the other clubs that come within this paragraph which are tolerably well filled on special evenings, but here again they are better patronised during the afternoons, as a rule, than the evenings. So far as betting and card-playing are concerned, there is, as a matter of course, not a little of these going on all the time in most sporting-clubs; but a card-room is to be found in the majority of London clubs, where whist, poker, or bridge, the most popular now of games of cards, is played for stakes of varying amounts. The Baldwin makes a feature of whist and bridge for small points. And as the evening rather than the afternoon lends itself to a game of whist or bridge, there is always a certain number of members to be seen in some of the clubs after dinner. And as for betting on races, this form of gambling is so national a characteristic that the wonder is, not that there is so

Sporting-clubs.


BOUNDER'S CLUB

much of it in the clubs, but that there is so little. That there are two or three gambling-clubs—which exist for gambling and nothing else—is well known to the initiate, but these lie as far under the surface of the life of the town as possible. The activity of the police has rendered the existence of these places exceedingly difficult, and in fact almost impossible.

The vast majority of London clubs fall under the head of social clubs. Some of these minister to a class, as for instance the St. James's, which is not in St. James's but in Piccadilly, where gather together the diplomatists of all nations, and the various University clubs, to which belong men from Oxford and Cambridge. Others, again, specially cater for artists, littérateurs, and dramatic folk. The grave and ineffably respectable Athenæum Club, which stands opposite the Senior, places literature in the forefront of its programme; but you will see not many literary men in it—rather will you behold, with a proper chastening of spirit, bishops, cabinet ministers, judges, and other elect pillars of the state. You have only to become a bishop to be at once admitted amongst its members—how simple a thing that is! Of literary men you will see a number (come for afternoon tea, as in so many other clubs in these days) at the Saville, the Authors', the Arundel, and the Savage; of artists at the Arts', the Burlington, and the Savage; of dramatic people at the Garrick, the Green Room, the O.P. (Old Playgoers'), the Playgoers', and, once again, the

Savage. Some of these clubs have special nights, and in the next chapter you shall go to a Saturday at the Savage, dine and spend the evening. Most of the social clubs bear no particular label. You may start with Arthur's in St. James's Street, where you will find yourself in very excellent society indeed, or Boodle's, in the same street, with its famous bay-window, and a class of supporters very similar to that at Arthur's. You may call in at the New Lyric, and wind up in the wee sma' 'oors at the Eccentric—of which a sketch is given in a succeeding chapter. If you desire something particularly exclusive—well, there is the Marlborough in Pall Mall, of which His Majesty the King, when Prince of Wales, was a member. The social clubs of the town are many—

Social clubs.

of all shapes, sizes, and prices, so to say—and it is impossible to imagine that there exists a man who would not find himself provided with a club to suit him (always pre-supposing he will suit the club) in one or more of them. A few of the clubs are extremely difficult to get into, whether as member or guest, as, for instance, the Beefsteak—more than one man, covetous of its membership, has found it 'impossible.' Again, there are some social clubs whose sociality is strictly confined to particular nights or occasions.

As illustrations, take two of the literary clubs, the Whitefriars' and the New Vagabonds'. Both of these are dinner-clubs, with discussions or speeches, or some other way of passing the evening after coffee and liqueurs have been sent round. Such evenings as these are pleasant enough, but there is nothing that can be called wildly exciting about them. Then in addition to the dinner-clubs there are the supper-clubs, of which the most fashionable and popular is the Grafton.

The Grafton is a Saturday Night club, and the Grafton Galleries, where the club holds its revels, lend themselves admirably for such affairs. 'Tis said that the *raison d'être* of the Grafton, as of other Saturday Night clubs, is the fact that as all the restaurants must close at midnight on Saturdays, there must be found some meeting-place (or rather eating-place!) for people 'after the theatres'—hence the Grafton Supper Club. But it is patronised by other people besides theatre-goers; there is the attraction of dancing as well as of supper. And at the club there is a certain amount of dancing during the evening — both before and after supper; perhaps you may see thirty couples or so dancing. But the great majority don't dance: they sit about and talk and flirt—all the usual human business, in fact. But probably

The Grafton Supper Club.

nowhere in the town will you see a bigger crowd of pretty, well-dressed women, and in the number there is a goodly sprinkling of the best-known actresses of the day, for amongst them and other members of the 'profession' the Grafton is in high favour. And if you want to dance at two o'clock of a Sunday morning, why, then, get some one to take you to the Grafton, and 'take no other.'

The clubs of London represent in a measure the whole life of London. They are not confined to people who are in society, or even on the outskirts of it, or to the middle classes; the East End also has its clubs, or what corresponds to clubs. Every class of the community, even to the lowest with its thieves' kitchens, has something of the kind. Discussion clubs are not so numerous as they once were, and the days of what used to be known as Judge and Jury clubs are past. In Soho, at once the most mysterious, interesting, and sinister (pray let the word pass, Mr. Critic) district of London, there is a variety of strange and curious clubs, some more or less well known, others deep and dark below the surface. It could hardly be otherwise in Soho, with its extraordinary mixture of all races and tongues. Of course, there is a Nihilist club—in all likelihood there are two or three Nihilist clubs—in Soho. And there are little clubs that meet in rooms far back from the shuttered windows that front the streets—mysterious little clubs that keep their business well out

Soho clubs.

of sight. In this quarter, at one time, there used to be more than one specimen of the 'Night Club,' but such dens have been raided by the police out of existence. Still, elsewhere, a Night Club is to be found, and, in another chapter, you shall see one. It is said, at the time this chapter is written, to be the only one left in the town.

CHAPTER XII

A SATURDAY NIGHT WITH THE 'SAVAGES'

'I am given to understand that your qualifications are that you must belong to literature and art, and also that you must be good fellows.'—HIS MAJESTY THE KING (when Prince of Wales) in 1882.

IT is just about twenty years ago since His Majesty, then Prince of Wales, uttered the words which stand at the head of this chapter, in a speech addressed to the assembled members of the Savage Club at one of their famous Saturday Night dinners. And the qualifications attaching to membership in the club are the same to-day as at that time, though the club itself has changed its character to a large extent since its first establishment.

Past and present.

There is no more celebrated club in its way than the Savage. To it have belonged a great many eminent men, and it still has on its roll a large number of distinguished names. In the beginning of its history the Savage was (to quote from one of its members) 'a small strip of that charming land of Bohemia,' but though it still strives to cling to the ancient ways, it is undoubtedly a good deal less Bohemian than it used to be. Some

one said of it the other day that it now contained more Respectabilities than Savages. Indeed, at the lunch-hour, seated at table there may be seen almost any day, bar Saturdays and Sundays, half a dozen (or more) editors of the great London papers, and every one knows that there is no one more respectable in the 'varsal world than the editor of a great London journal. To the primitive Savages these editors seated in their club would have been the saddest of spectacles.

Mr. Harry Furniss in his entertaining *Confessions of a Caricaturist*, recently published, and a former member of the Savage, says: 'The Savage Club is a remnant of Bohemian London. It was started at a period when art, literature, and the drama were at their lowest ebb—in the "good old days" when artists wore seedy velveteen coats, smoked clays, and generally had their works of art exhibited in pawnbrokers' windows; when journalists were paid at the same rate and received the same treatment as office-boys; and when actors commanded as many shillings a week as they do pounds at present. This typical trio now exists only in the imagination of the lady-novelist. When first the little band of Savages met, they smoked their calumets over a public-house in the vicinity of Drury Lane, in a room with a sanded floor; a chop and a pint of ale was their fare, and good fellowship atoned for lack of funds. The brothers Brough, Andrew Halliday, Tom Robertson, and other

The primitive Savages.

clever men were the original Savages, and the latter (*sic*) in one of his charming pieces made capital out of an incident at the club. One member asks another for a few shillings. "Very sorry, old chap, I haven't got it, but I'll ask Smith!" Smith replies, "Not a cent myself, but I'll ask Brown." Brown asks Robinson, and so on until a Crœsus is found with five shillings in his pocket, which he is only too willing to lend. But this true Bohemianism is as dead as Queen Anne, and the Savages now live merely on the traditions of the past.'

So writes Mr. Furniss, though later in the same chapter he is kind enough to admit that 'no doubt some excellent men and good fellows are still in the Savage wigwam.' He talks of now finding in the Garrick Club the desired element in its maturity, that is, the true Bohemian character 'the Savage endeavoured at that time to emulate.' But even the Garrick at midnight, when it is at its most Bohemian pitch—during the day-time it is as solidly conventional as any place in town—is not what it was. It is a Bohemia in evening-dress! Fancy a Bohemia in evening-dress! The truth is that there is very little genuine Bohemianism in London; and, Mr. Furniss to the contrary notwithstanding, there is more of the real thing to be found surviving at the Savage than at the Garrick. Still, there is no great amount of it there either. More extensive remains, so to speak, of the old Bohemianism may be viewed at one or two of

The vanished Bohemians.

the smaller clubs, such as the Yorick. But the fact is that the clublands of literature, art, and the drama are, for much the most part, peopled with prosperous men who, if they do not fare sumptuously every day, live in a state of a continuous series of 'square meals'—a state which would have been esteemed by the old Bohemians one of monumental luxury. As a writer on this subject has well remarked: 'The poor man of genius—often drunken, dirty, and disreputable—is wellnigh as extinct as the dodo.'

How the Savage came to get its name is not quite clear. Sala always declared that the name was taken in mere fun—the idea being largely assisted by the fact that the club was presented with some old tomahawks and mocassins, a collection of spear-heads and wampum-belts, and a scalp! Be this as it may, it is certainly the case that 'Lo, the poor Indian,' otherwise the North American abori*gine*, is much in evidence not only in the decorations of the club itself, but also on those elaborate menus which make their appearance on the occasion of the Saturday Night dinners —to one of which you shall presently go. On the walls of the club are to be seen a large number of savage weapons and trophies, and there is at least a grain of truth in the legend that the chairman keeps his fellow Savages in order with a 'great big club.' For the gavel or mallet (it isn't a mallet, but no word more appropriate suggests itself) with which the chair calls attention to its behests is

Why Savage?

undoubtedly a genuinely savage article—quite literally, it is a savage club. Now, when 'poor Lo' was engaged in an earnest argument with a rival, he did not use a club at all; the use of such a weapon would

probably have damaged the scalp of his opponent, and that was a thing which Lo's Feeling for the Beautiful did not permit. So, 'tis evident that while the Savages of London regard the North American

Hiawathas as their prototypes, they yet hold other savages in reverence.

The club-house is on Adelphi Terrace, overlooking the river. And, of course, you would like to take a peep at the rooms before you sit down to dinner with your hosts. The dining-room, an apartment of some size, has in it a piece of furniture you don't often see in dining-rooms, and that is a grand piano. The fact that it is here at once suggests that the Savage breast is soothed—well, as savage breasts are understood to be soothed all the world over. On the walls are a great many pictures, the work of well-known artists. Across a hallway is a supper-room, and in it you will see on the walls a collection of the fanciful menus, done by members of the club, of bygone Saturday dinners. These menus are not the least interesting things in the club. On them there are portraits of the Savage chief in the chair, of some of the more prominent of his supporters, and of the guests, on the particular evening. To refresh your memory of these menus one of them is reproduced here. Extremely contagious to both dining-room and supper-room is a liquid-refreshment bar, and here Savage hospitality will not be satisfied unless you get outside of a more or less considerable quantity of fire-water. You will, of course, remember that the consumption of fire-water has notoriously always been a marked characteristic of savage (small s, please, printer—so as to prevent any misunder-

Savage menus.

standing) life. Upstairs are the library, billiard-room, and card-room. You really have no business to glance into the library—it is the den specially reserved in the club for Savages. But if you do happen accidentally, as you might put it, to look in, you may behold evidence that the historic 'savage roar' is not unheard in these parts; in other words, you will see an Appeal to Members not to make quite so much noise as it seemed they had done on some previous occasion; there may be even more than one such pathetic Appeal. And now you sneak out of this savage lair into the billiard-room, where is a capital table; and then into the card-room, in which is a table whose shape may hint to you that these gentle Savages are familiar with 'seeing' and 'raising' other things besides 'hair,' but doubtless in a strictly 'limited' manner.

And now you descend into the dining-room, where the feast is spread. Along the end of the room next the river runs a long table: in its centre is your Savage host, right and left of him are the guests of the evening. At right angles to the 'high table' are the other tables, and if the occasion is a big one, they are somewhat apt to be more than a bit crowded. You look around, and you observe you are in very excellent company. The dinner itself is modest enough, but it too is excellent—soup, fish, entrée, joint, remove, sweets, ices. And all the time the room is in such a buzz! The hum of talk, the cackle of

You dine with the Savages.

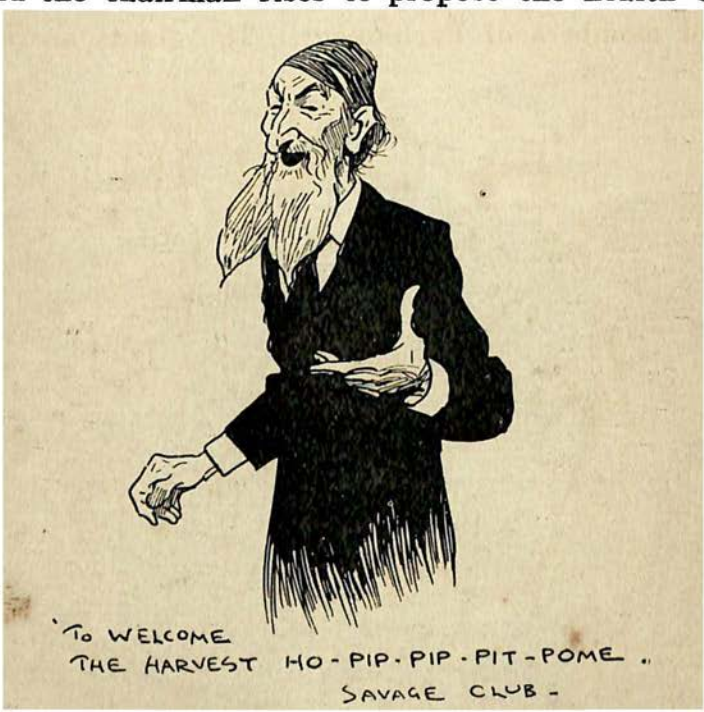
TOM BROWNE
SATURDAY · NIGHT ·
AT · THE · SAVAGE ·
CLUB ·
THE · BAR ·

laughter, the splutter of corks, the whole agreeable if not ideally beautiful human business of eating and drinking, fill the place with what the Scottish paraphrase calls 'a joyful noise.' Dinner over, the

chairman pounds three times (the mystic Savage number) on the table with the savage club hereinbefore mentioned, toasts the King, and allows the assembled braves to puff the Pipe of Peace. And

next succeed more talk, more laughter, more noise —which, as might be expected, has now an appropriately 'full' tone.

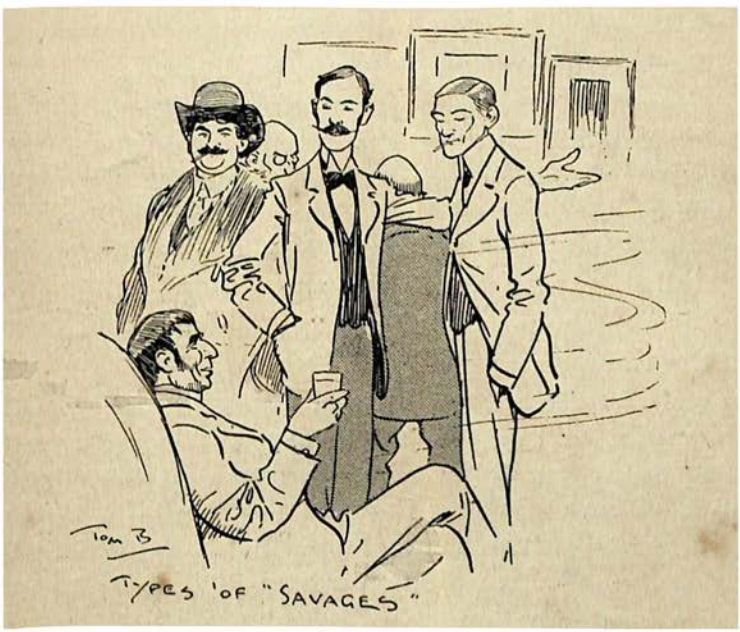
Presently, the club again is hammered on the table, and the chairman rises to propose the health of



the guest or guests of the evening—there are generally several. The guests of the Savages are always those who have 'done something.' It hardly matters, short of burglary, what the something is, for the hospitality of the club is of the most catholic and tolerant character. So the Savages have

welcomed with fit entertainment great (and not so great—for everybody can't be great) folks of every kind — soldiers, sailors, artists, authors, actors, musicians, war-correspondents, and such lesser lights as princes, and dukes, and members of Parliament. The guests are all

Guests of the Savages.



of the male persuasion, and the Savages themselves leave behind them their squaws in their wigwams in the wilds of Kensington and Clapham. This contempt for women-kind, however, is an ancient, ineradicable 'note' of your true savage. On the whole, the Savages of Adelphi Terrace are not over-fond of listening to long or many speeches.

Is there some subtle connection between this fact and the absence of the fair? Nay, nay, it cannot be! Yet—yet—you donno! As a rule, at these dinners there are either no speeches, or else they are 'cut very short.' But to every rule there are exceptions, and when a really bright man talks, why then really bright men are very glad to listen to him, unless, as sometimes unfortunately happens even in the best-regulated families, they happen to want to talk too. Now, the want-to-talk is the worst-felt want of life, and the Savages feel it as strongly as most, but they set their faces like Stoics against giving in to it. Therefore is the pow-wow curtailed. At most, 'few and short' is the motto.

But the chairman is speaking. His remarks are of the humorous variety, and you will be surprised how little sad they make you. As a general thing there is nothing more depressing than a humorous speech, nothing duller. But dulness is at a tremendous discount among the Savages, and the chairman is well aware of it. And so he says only a few words, more or less complimentary (if he can make them less complimentary, but without offence, so much the more will they be relished) to the guest or guests of the club, and he tells a few stories.

Toasting guests.

Lord Rosebery, who among other things is a wit, once defined memory as the feeling which steals over us when we listen to the original stories of our friends. And it may be that your memory will be touched by the

chairman's stories, but more likely than not it won't. Here is a savage, a genuinely savage story, which was heard on one of these occasions—that on which the guests of the club were several of the war-correspondents who had won distinction in South Africa.

After having said a lot of nice sugary things, he proceeded to add the salt of humorous depreciation. He remarks that the main elements in the make-up of a war-correspondent are his facility for spending money, and his difficulty in accounting to his 'proprietors' for it. 'A short way with war-correspondents,' he says, 'should be: no accounts, no money.' Then he illustrates. 'Once upon a time,' he continues, 'a new missionary Bishop, with very strict ideas, went out to a diocese in savage parts, in succession to a Bishop who had been somewhat lax. The new Bishop saw that his flock smoked, drank, ate, wived, to excess. Sad at heart but resolved to show them that they must "change all that," he determined that tobacco, gin, feasting, and polygamy must go. He called the chief to him, and told him what was in his (the Bishop's) mind. "What!" exclaimed the chief; "no more bacca!" "No," replied the Bishop firmly. "What!" said the chief; "no more square-face!" "No," answered the Bishop sternly. "What! no more fat pig sing-song!" "No," cried the Bishop, with decision. "What!" shouted the chief; "no more than one wife!" "No," returned the Bishop,

A Savage savage story.

very peremptorily. The chief looked at the Bishop, but the Bishop showed no signs of relenting; his fiat had gone forth. "What!" said the chief angrily; "no more bacca, no more square-face, no more fat pig sing-song, no more than one wife!" "No," said the Bishop. "Then," decided the chief, "no more alleluia!"' Yells of delighted laughter greet the

SAVAGE CLUB CONCERT.

chairman's story—none laughing more consumedly than the war-correspondents themselves. After the chairman come the responses of the guests, who of course catch the Savage ear, but may not always catch the Savage heart; sometimes they catch something else. As, for example. Not long ago a young member of Parliament, who is unquestionably a very clever fellow, but who unluckily for himself made

the mistake of posing as A Superior Person, in which rôle he read the assembled Savages a little essay on English, was gravely thanked for the 'fifth-form' lecture he had been good enough to deliver. The same member, a moment earlier, reduced a certain noble duke to the common level by reminding him that at school he had been called 'Grease-pot.'

After the speeches comes the serious business of the evening, which takes the form of an improvised entertainment contributed *con amore* by the Savages. It is a smoking-concert of a superior sort. And now you will listen to some of the cleverest entertainers of the town, that is to say, of the world. You will perhaps hear a tenor tell you once again that the Miller's Daughter has grown so dear, and, sung like that, she grows dearer every trip. Then will follow a recitation, a piece of declamation, an amusing sketch, a funny story; then another song—perhaps in a thunderous, immensely patriotic bass. Next an artist will draw a lightning picture—more probably a dozen of them, taking for his subjects, it may be, the chairman, the guests of the evening, or some well-known Savages. These portraits are almost certain to be of the species yclept caricatures, but caricatures or not, they are sure to be good. After the pictures there may come an original poem, sure to be funny, or another song, humorous or sentimental, as the case may be. Or something on the piano, or on the violin, also as the case may be. And then you may

After the speeches.

hear some plain truths about a certain Dr. Samuel Johnson from his friend Boswell—which may remind you of some 'plain truths' recently put forth by a living author with respect to a dead one. And so the evening goes on, quickly, trippingly, entertainingly—this is one of the entertainments that *do* entertain. Between eleven and twelve the assembly begins to thin, as the Savages go off to wigwam and squaw and papooses. By midnight it is pretty well all over.

CHAPTER XIII

WITH THE 'ECCENTRICS'—3 A.M.

'Come along to the Eccentric for a bit of supper.'—Any Member.

THE invitation at the head of this chapter has been given you. Perhaps you have never entered the hospitable doors of the Eccentric Club, but you have heard about it, and the very name itself piques your curiosity. Besides, it is now nearly three o'clock, and you are ravenous. Why you should be up so late (or early) is your own affair, and you are not called upon to incriminate yourself. But the invitation is extended, and you gladly accept it. The rooms of the club are in Shaftesbury Avenue, not far from Piccadilly Circus, and hither you hie with the friendly member whose guest you are to be. *En route* you will probably make inquiry as to how the club comes by its suggestive appellation, and you hear, with some little natural disappointment it may be, that the only eccentric thing about the club is its name. But has the club no special features? you ask; and then you hear that it has at any rate one peculiarity, and this peculiarity consists in certain of the

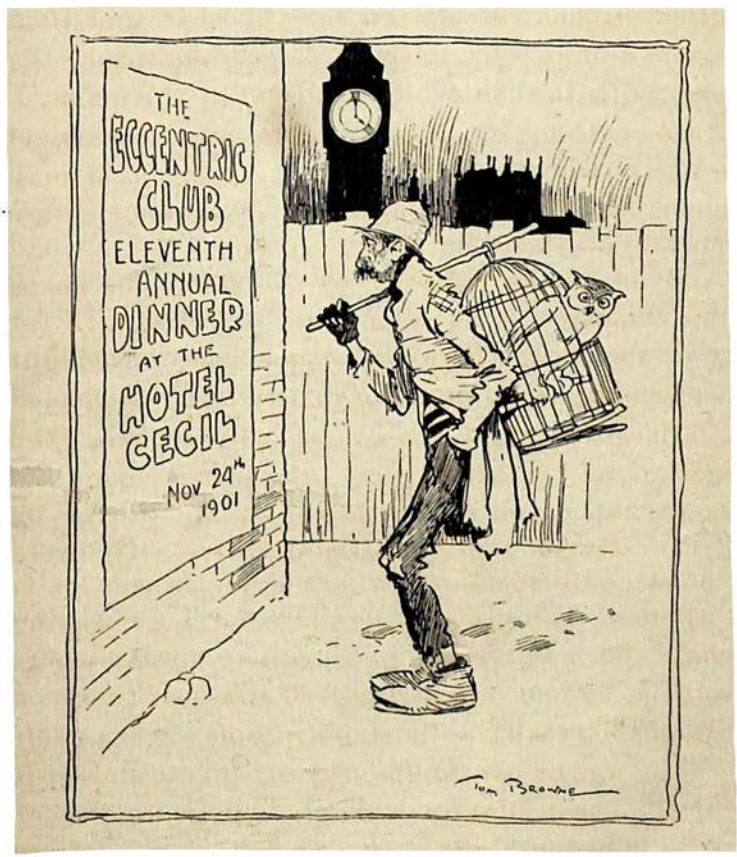
Why Eccentrics?

members from time to time making up 'surprise' theatre-parties. A furniture van, for choice, is hired, the 'surprisers' get into it, drive off to the particular theatre selected for the visit, and then descend upon that theatre in force and capture the stalls (with the benevolent consent of the management or without it). There are not a few theatrical managers who are quite willing, strange as it may appear, to be Eccentricised in this manner—more especially as the raiders pay, pay, pay.

Arrived at the entrance to the club, you go in from the street, now silent and deserted save for one or two wandering shadows, and ascend a flight of stairs, the walls of the stairway being decorated with large photographs of celebrities. You then walk into a handsome room—the smoke-room and general talk-room of the place. A big canvas by 'P.A.L.' (Paleologue) immediately takes your eye—it is the only picture in the room. Its subject is mythological—a group of nymphs and satyrs having a high old time, in a climate, so to speak, where even the fig-leaf was considered too pronounced a garment for really well-dressed people. At one side of the painting is a grand piano, and on it are books of cuttings, menus, and other memorabilia. In another place you are sure to notice a programme of a theatrical entertainment given by the 'Lambs' of New York, a club whose members are also, by arrangement, members of the Eccentric, and *vice versa*. The piece

The smoking-room.

given on that occasion was 'His Christmas Alimony,' and the programme bears the signatures of a great many distinguished 'Lambs,' foremost amongst



them being that of Mr. Nat Goodwin. The badge of the Eccentric is a stuffed owl, from whose mouth there depends a clock whereon appear the figures 'XII' and 'IIII.' And you will see the badge repeated

in the pattern of the carpet on the floor. About this clock more presently.

But your host has ordered supper for you, and you proceed into the dining-room, which is in several respects one of the most striking sights in London. To begin with, the walls are covered with paintings and 'things,' such as old picturesque weapons and the like. On the cross-piece of the doorway through which you have just come in is the verse—

> 'O wad some Power the giftie gie us
> To see oursels as ithers see us!'

(And you think it wouldn't be a bad idea if these lines were placed above the doorposts of every club smoking-room you know.) In one corner of the room is the bar, and the barmen are kept pretty busy, for though it is three in the morning there are plenty of members about. And on the walls at the same side of the room are a series of clever portraits of some of the better-known Eccentrics, done by Julius Price, the heads being life-size, the bodies dwarfed. Then you look at the other pictures.

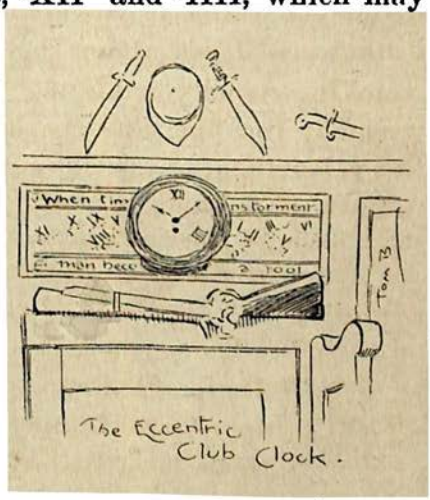
The dining-room.

There, flanking both sides of one of the doors, are Dudley Hardys; beside one of them is a Ludovic—'St. Eccentricus and the Temptation' (an Eccentric rendering of the St. Antony business); a little further along is a 'Nocturne in Blue and Silver'; near it is what might be called 'Venus through the Looking-Glass'; then more pictures. You will hardly fail to observe

that the ladies in these paintings belong to the period when clothes were at a fabulous discount, and bargain-sales were still uninvented. Having gazed on the charms of these nude figures, you look at the clock, the most characteristic piece of furniture about the club. Set in a frame on which is written the legend of the Dancing Hours, accompanied by the words—

'When time turns torment
A Man becomes a Fool,'

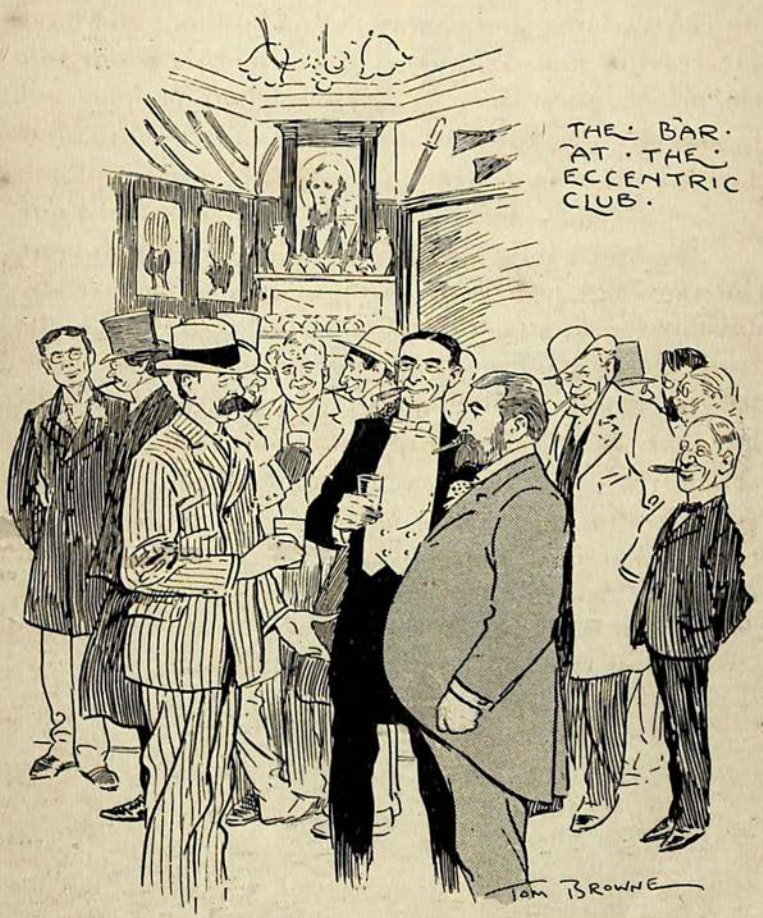
is the famous clock, on whose face there are displayed but two hours, 'XII' and 'IIII,' which may serve to suggest to you that the club takes no count of time from midnight till four in the morning. If you look at the sketch of it in this chapter you will see exactly what it is.



Well, you have supped—perhaps you have had some *plat*, such as haddock and poached eggs, for which the club has a particular liking—and there is still half an hour or so before the Eccentric reluctantly closes its doors upon you, and your host asks you up to the billiard-room

—there's 'just time for a game.' But when you go upstairs, you find more members up here playing the wee sma' 'oors away. You look on, and have a last drink and a smoke. Here, in this room too, are many portraits of distinguished people—not necessarily are they all members of the club, but they are all of men who have won the great diploma —they have all 'done something.' Your host tells you meanwhile something about the members, mentioning well-known actors, artists, dramatists, financiers, and you can see for yourself, from the predominant type of face, that the last-named seem to be in something of a majority. You have heard of that strangely beautiful creature called the 'Oof Bird,' and you conclude without much hesitation that he must be very much like an owl, with a clock hanging out of his beak, whereon (on the clock, not the beak) are marked 'XII' and 'IIII.' An Eccentric bird, in fact. But now it is time to go, and you sally forth into the street.

Eccentrics.


THE BAR AT THE ECCENTRIC CLUB.
TOM BROWNE

CHAPTER XIV

'LA VIE DE BOHÈME'

. . . And then *vogue la galère*! and back again to Bohemia, dear Bohemia and all its joys. . . .'—DU MAURIER, *Trilby*.

SHAKESPEARE gave 'Bohemia' a sea-coast; it would be nearly as incorrect to say that London nowadays has within it a Bohemia. In former times there was something of the sort in Chelsea, but London has never had a Bohemia, well delimited and recognised as such, in the same sense that Paris has, or perhaps rather had, one in the 'Latin Quarter.' Not that London has ever lacked Bohemians in plenty, but it has had no real Latin Quarter. No English author can ever write about a London Bohemia as, for instance, Du Maurier wrote of the Paris Bohemia. In *Trilby* he speaks of 'those who only look upon the good old Quartier Latin (now no more to speak of) as a very low, common, vulgar quarter indeed, deservedly swept away, where 'misters the students' (shocking bounders and cads) had nothing better to

No London Latin Quarter.

do, day and night, than mount up to a horrid place called the thatched house—*la chaumière*—

"Pour y dancer le cancan
Ou le Robert Macaire—
Toujours—toujours—toujours—
La nuit comme le jour . . .
Et youp! youp! youp!
Tra la la la la . . . la la la!"'

Well, London has no 'good old Quartier Latin.' In a kind of a way the Soho district may be called a Latin Quarter of London, but in quite another sense from that used in connection with Paris. For one thing, the system of art-teaching in England is very different from that which prevails in France. In the latter country, or rather in Paris, for in art Paris is France, as it is in so many other things, 'misters the students' study and work in the ateliers of the great painters as pupils or disciples, whereas in England they do nothing of the sort, but study and work more or less independently of the recognised Masters, such as the Academicians and the like. On the other hand, the students and the younger artists who have got beyond the student stage, and some of the older men too, have banded themselves into clubs for the purposes of mutual criticism, encouragement, assistance, and sympathy, the practical side being kept well to the fore. There are some art clubs which are purely social. And, again, most of the greater painters are members of clubs that have nothing

London art clubs.

to do with art. But there are two or three clubs which are devoted solely to art, by which here is meant the Art of Painting. In this chapter you are invited to take a look at two of these clubs, the Langham and the London Sketch Clubs. What may be styled their Night Side is one of the most attractive phases of London.

The Langham.

The Langham, which has its rooms in a little street within a stone's-throw of the Langham Hotel, is the older club; indeed, it is the parent of the other. It got to be somewhat overcrowded, and threw off a colony, as it were, which presently set up business for itself as the London Sketch Club. To the Langham have belonged (and still belong) some of the best-known painters of the day—you will see them on those occasions when the club has its reunions, which generally take the shape of the smoking-concert that is so common a feature of the Night Side of London. But, for the most part, it is a considerable number of the younger men, who are following in the footsteps of their elders, some very near and others, of course, at some distance, who use the Langham, and the same is true of the London Sketch Club. Two features both clubs have in common: one is, as might be expected, they are closed as soon as work can be done in the open air; and the other is that each, during the winter season, devotes one evening each week for exactly two hours to painting two subjects—of which more

anon. In fact, these two-hour sketches (naturally, one doesn't imagine pictures can be styled 'finished' that have taken only two hours' work) are the sole feature of the London Sketch Club. At the Langham, however, there is on the other evenings of the week painting from life-models. In one of the rooms is the 'model-throne,' and round it is arranged a kind of gallery, with head-lights, for the men to paint at. If you take a glance about you you will see the rooms are something of the quaintest, with plenty of artist properties to be seen. Work over for the evening, the artists compare notes—a process which can hardly be otherwise than valuable. They then have some supper, to a running accompaniment, you will readily believe, of badinage and sportive remark.

Some features.

The artist who is illustrating this book is a member of the London Sketch Club, and you shall now go with him to it, and have a peep at one of those two-hour sketching tournaments of friendliest competition which are the speciality of this institution. Their rooms are in Bond Street at the Modern Gallery, and they meet every Friday evening while the winter season lasts. Generally there is a choice of two subjects, a landscape subject and a figure subject, so as to give the landscape-men and the figure-men an equal opportunity. One or two artists—a man like Dudley Hardy, for example—will one evening select a landscape theme, on another a figure subject. The

Two-hour sketches.

former may be 'The land was broad and fair to see,' while the latter may perhaps be 'After the Ball.' The artists begin work ('to slop colour,' in the words of the candid friend) at seven o'clock; at nine the whistle is blown, and the brushes are thrown down. Then there succeeds a quarter of an hour of frank but friendly criticism. Each artist has his own idea how the subject set is to be treated, and hence there are as many ways of treating it as there are artists. For instance, take the subject 'After the Ball.'

Mr. Jack Hassall's idea of it will be, you may suppose, an old gentleman sound asleep in a chair, his head dropping on to his crumpled shirt-front—there is a certain suggestion of the old chap having partaken of the ball supper not wisely but too well. Mr. Robert Sauber will present the figure of a dainty girl, a little bit tired perhaps, but not too tired to study her programme with interest as she recalls the men who have been her partners. Mr. Cecil Aldin will show us a match at polo, where men are 'after the ball' in a very different sense from that given to the phrase by the two foregoing painters. Mr. Starr-Wood will, you may be sure, have a humorous concept of the subject. Mr. Lance Thackeray will as certainly delight you with something pretty. Mr. Tom Browne, who is acting in this case as your guide, philosopher, and friend in a double sense, will undoubtedly have given the subject a touch of that

'After the Ball.'

broadly human humour for which he is famous. Likely enough, he will show up a realistic sketch of a most powerful, not to say brutal, footballer, in full stride 'after the ball.' And so on. And now you have mastered *the* feature of the Sketch Club, so far as its working side is concerned. And when the quarter of an hour's criticism (not at all a *mauvais quart d'heure*!) is over, the members sit down to supper at a long table, at which they again, to use the classic terms, 'distinguish themselves.' You see the whole thing is a happy combination of work and play.

At both the Langham and the London Sketch Clubs there is no little jollity. Larks, frolics, jokes, some of them of the practical variety, tricks, and genial buffooneries are 'frequent and free' amongst their members, as might be anticipated from the fact that so many of them are young men—some of them are 'very young indeed.' But what an infection of good spirits, what a contagion of gay and genuine camaraderie, characterise them all!

True Bohemians.

Here, at all events, are to be found some true Bohemians. For Bohemia is not the name of a country, or a place, or even of a 'quarter,' but is that of a condition, a state of mind and heart, the outward expression of a temperament which revels in the joy of life. Yet it must be confessed that there is less of the Bohemian in the art-life of London than there used to be. The artist has become a member of the 'respectable'

classes; he is in 'society'—if he wishes to be in it, and he generally chooses to be so. True, the English artist never was of the Murger type. If you have read Stevenson's novel, *The Wrecker*, you may remember how Loudoun Dodd speaks of being 'a little Murger-mad in the Latin Quarter.' And he goes on to say, 'I looked with awful envy on a certain countryman of my own who had a studio in the Rue Monsieur le Prince, wore boots, and long hair in a net, and could be seen tramping off, in this guise, to the worst eating-house of the quarter, followed by a Corsican model, his mistress, in the conspicuous costume of her race and calling.' Well, never was there anything of this sort in London. And at the Sketch Club you will notice that misters the artists are dressed very much like anybody else. It may be that one reason of this is because the spirit of caricature is pretty rampant there, and has several very able interpreters. So it is not well to have any affectations, mannerisms, or peculiarities. If you have any of these things, you will be made to feel you are better without them.

Here is an illustration, taken from an article on 'London Sketch Club Frolics,' which appeared in the *Art Record* last year: 'One prominent member has so great a propensity for speech-making that the others, upon a certain occasion, rose as one man, to violently discourage the orator. A number of cards and canvases, etc., were prepared with appropriate legends thereon, so that when the

speechist rose to his feet at the first provocation, there was a sudden movement all over the room, and upon the ends of sticks, and grasped in upheld hands, the afore-mentioned notices were thrust out so that there was nothing to be seen but such boldly lettered exclamations as "Chuck it," "Rats," "Drop it," "Dry up," "Give us a charnse!" and other encouraging remarks. The remedy was efficacious.'

Encouraging an orator.

The next quotation from the same article is of a different order, but is an excellent sample of Sketch Club humour. 'Phil May once made a famous speech. He rose with great ceremony, and, gravely taking out a pair of spectacles, adjusted them on his nose with much gravity. He then coughed, and paused while he placed a pair of pince-nez over his spectacles. Having done this, he coughed again, and looked around, then taking out another pair of glasses, put them on also. The members now sat waiting anxiously. He beamed through his various spectacles upon them, and then opened his mouth, but didn't speak, because he suddenly felt in his pocket and found there some more spectacles, which he similarly placed over the others. This went on for some time, Phil always opening his mouth to speak, and then pausing to put on another pair of spectacles, until he had no less than seven or eight pairs. Then he spoke at last. He said "Tut, tut!" and sat down gravely.'

A famous oration.

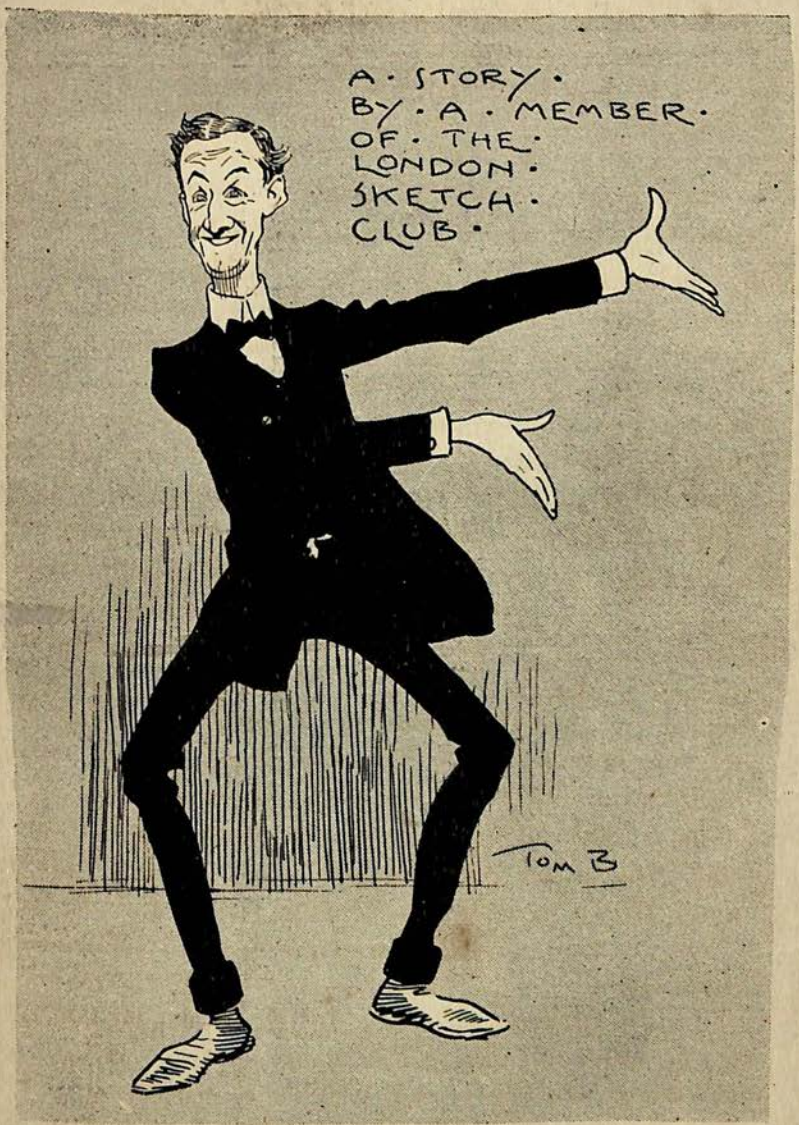
At the beginning and end of the season (October

to May) these art clubs have an entertainment to which guests are invited. At each there is an exhibition of pictures: at the spring one, the work shown is that which has been done in the winter; at the autumn one, the paintings which have been painted during the summer months when the clubs are closed. You have had the good luck, for it is good luck, to be invited to one of these functions—let us say at the London Sketch Club Autumn Exhibition and Smoker. In the rooms you will see a good many distinguished people, and some people who will be even more distinguished by and by. You notice, of course, the walls are covered with paintings, and you get a catalogue. From this you learn that the officers and council of the club include George Haité, Dudley Hardy, Walter Fowler, Frank Jackson, Giffard Lanfestey, Sanders Fiske, Paul Bevan, Cecil Aldin, Tom Browne, Walter Churcher, John Hassall, Lee-Hankey, Phil May, Robert Sauber, Lance Thackeray, Claude Shepperson, and Montague Smith. And amongst the other members you see other well-known names—they are not all of painters, for you observe that Conan Doyle, most catholic of men, Frankfort Moore, one of the wittiest, Arthur Diosy, one of the politest, and others who do not, strictly speaking, belong to the brotherhood of the brush, are on the list. Many of these gentlemen you may meet in the course of what is sure to be a pleasant, not to say festive, meeting.

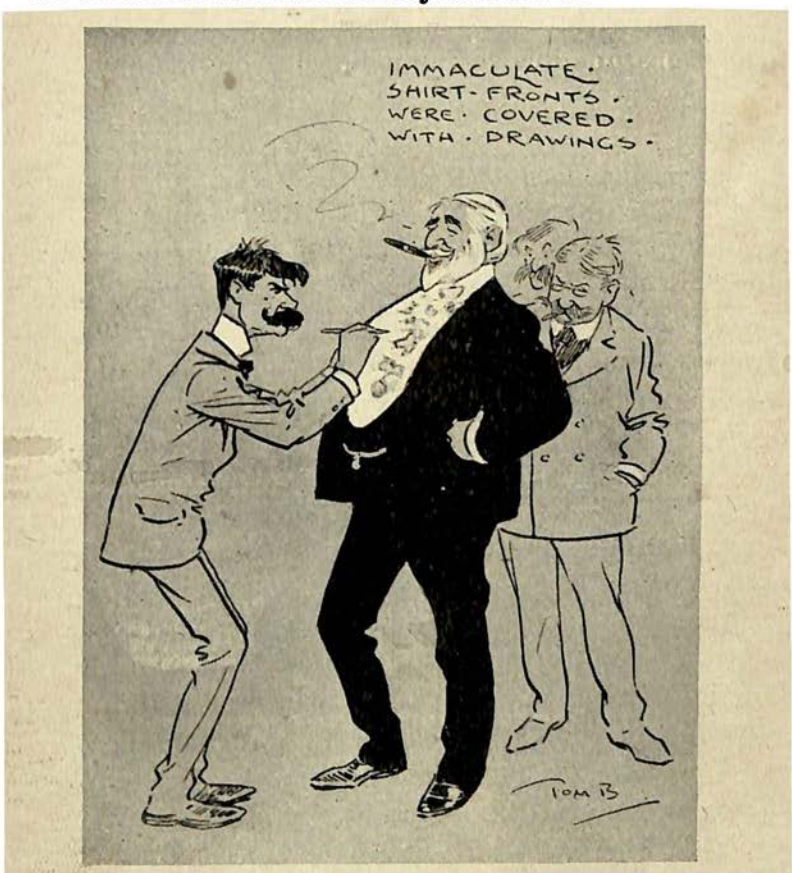
Sketch Club exhibition and smoker.

You go the round of the pictures, and you will indubitably find much to admire. The canvases are usually small, and are not priced too high for modest purses. And you may pick up for a few guineas a 'bit' which in the future, when its painter has risen to greater fame, may be the best investment of your life. Somewhere between eight and nine the smoker begins. By this time the rooms are very full, and it is difficult to move about. A chairman appears, and announces in stentorian tones that 'our frivolities will commence.' There follows a cheerful noise on the piano, and next a song—generally of no kill-joy sort. And then you may see a very excellent 'turn,' as they call it in the music-halls, by Starr-Wood, who will do facial impersonations, so to speak, of some of the best-known members of the club while you look on. He will begin with Mr. Haité, the president; it is an excellent rendition of Mr. Haité's face—a trifle caricatured, of course, but eminently recognisable. You observe that Mr. Haité laughs as consumedly as any one, and loudly acclaims the 'facial artist.' Then after Mr. Haité come Mr. Phil May, Mr. Hassall, Mr. Dudley Hardy, and many more victims of the clever impersonator. Next on the programme are two or three songs—all of them good, rollicking, robustious ditties. Between the songs are pauses, when there is conversation—and likewise drinks. Most of the men, you may now notice, are in ordinary dress, though some are in the

The smoker.


A · STORY ·
BY · A · MEMBER ·
OF · THE ·
LONDON ·
SKETCH ·
CLUB ·
TOM B

regulation evening costume. And of the latter a word. But here you may again see all about it in the veracious article already alluded to—



'It is not always wise to enter the barbarous precincts of the club in evening-dress. Several individuals did so upon a certain occasion. But very little time had elapsed when their immaculate shirt-

"fronts were covered with drawings like the pages of a sketch-book. Almost immediately, the wheeze, which had been intended to annoy rather than please, leapt into sudden popularity, so that those who were unadorned immediately sought such decoration, and pretty quickly every shirt-front was drawn or scrawled over. One individual declared that he intended to cut out the front from the shirt for the purpose of framing it, and, considering it bore signed drawings by Phil May, Dudley Hardy, Tom Browne, Hassall, Sauber, Cecil Aldin, and others as famous, the notion was reasonable. It is said that this incident is the origin of the phrase, "Our artist at the front."' Well, there is the story as set forth in the *Art Record*, but it is possible enough that you may go to the club smoker with the most impressive amplitude of 'biled shirt' in the world, and yet never a single brush or pencil touch it.

Shirt-fronts as canvases!

After the songs there will come perhaps a short divertisement in the shape of some feats of mimicry or ventriloquism. You may hear a man imitate a child's voice—from babyhood up to five or six years of age—with such absolute fidelity, that if you close your eyes you will be bound to believe you are in a nursery. And you laugh—you can't help it, you laugh till the tears run down your cheeks. Other forms of entertainment are provided for you in abundance. A favourite seems to be the music of an orchestra composed entirely of members of the club.

A · NIGHT · AT · THE · LONDON · SKETCH · CLUB.

THE · "BOUSA" BAND.

Recently, there was to be seen an orchestra, which called itself 'the celebrated Bousa Band,' and on the door as you entered there was hung up an announcement that during the evening it would play a selection of music, 'as played before all the crowned heads of Europe, Asia, Africa, America, Ireland, and Bosham.' You may wonder where Bosham is, or perhaps you know. But it doesn't really matter—you take the kingdom of Bosham for granted. And, presently, the band walks upon the stage, carrying enormous instruments of brass-covered cardboard or papier-maché. You do not recognise the faces of the performers, because they have covered them with masks, nor do they wear such clothes as you would expect them to wear; they are dressed in uniforms of sorts, and their coats are decorated with vast discs of tin in lieu of medals. With much solemnity do they begin, but hardly have they commenced to emit their music (?) when there is a general desire felt to laugh and shout rather than listen to it. In truth, the music is as unmusical as well it can be. But everybody is in high spirits, and naturally the selections of the Bousa Band are encored with even greater heartiness, not to say enthusiasm, than was displayed by His Majesty of Bosham. Piece follows piece in rapid succession, each being welcomed with uproarious delight, until, finally, the repertoire of the band is exhausted. Bousa himself, who has conducted their efforts with wonderful dash and go,

The celebrated Bousa Band.

disappears with his band, while the room fairly shakes with the plaudits of the crowd.

Other things there will be, all lively and amusing, until near midnight. But at that hour the members have agreed to depart—at least that is the order nowadays. Formerly, and more particularly at the Langham, it was the custom to keep up these entertainments into the 'wee sma' 'oors,' but it is significant of that 'respectability' to which reference has already been made, that midnight is now considered quite late enough for the termination of these festivities. Many of the artists live at some distance away, and they want to get home by the last train or the last 'bus, as it may be. In any case, they and you will have spent a thoroughly enjoyable evening.

LIBRARY OF THE BOMBAY BRANCH OF THE ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY.

CHAPTER XV

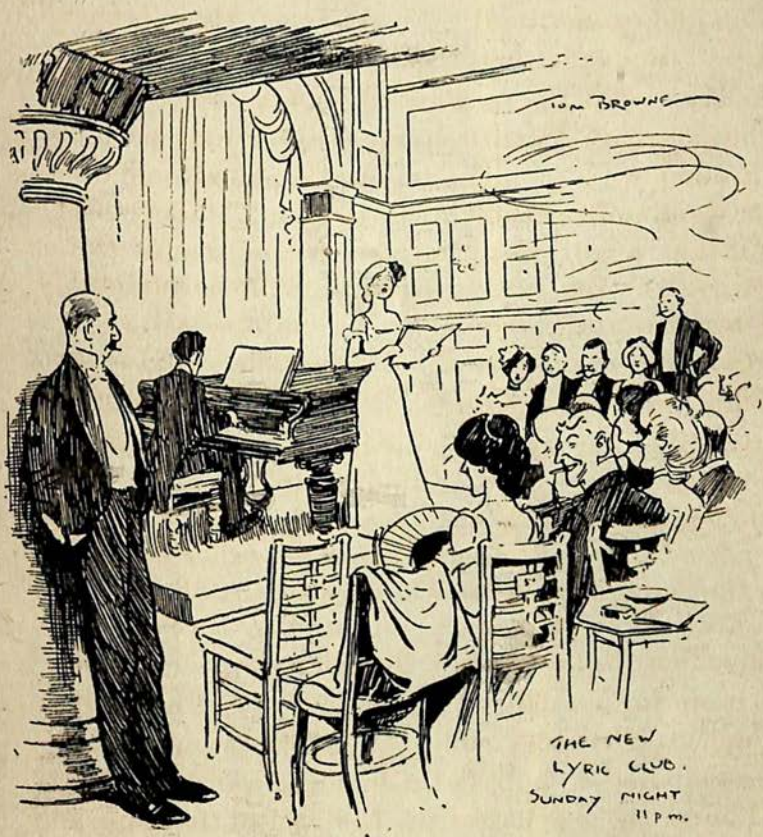
SUNDAY NIGHT AT THE NEW LYRIC

A LARGE, somewhat smoke-begrimed, but yet handsome building (a block they would call it in America) stands within a stone's-throw of Piccadilly Circus, on Coventry Street, between Oxendon Street and Whitcomb Street. The western part of it is occupied by the Prince of Wales Theatre—the eastern by the New Lyric Club; it is to one of the Sunday evenings of the latter that you are now invited. First, there will be dinner at eight, with music; to that will succeed an entertainment at ten o'clock in the theatre of the club; then there will be supper at midnight. But before you go in to dinner you, as a stranger, are asked if you would like to see over the club—and of course you would. And certainly you will not regret it, for the interior of the New Lyric is quite different from that of any other club in the world. To begin with, there is the theatre, decorated in cream and gold, with a pretty little stage, and accommodation for three or four hundred people. Here, as you will be told, have appeared some of the

The club-house.

greatest artists of the time. Next, you ascend the stairs, and are shown the various rooms, the decoration and furniture of which make each of them distinct and even unique. For instance, there is the Egyptian Room with its Cairene lattice-work, or, again, the Cabin Room, where you will fancy yourself on board an Atlantic liner. Or you may prefer to sit down for a moment in the Bamboo Room, or the Music Room, or the Ladies' Drawing Room (this club makes a feature of lady-guests), or one of the other rooms. But everywhere you will see tasteful and artistic and harmonious ensembles—all your surroundings are pleasant and agreeable. And now you dine, either in the Lunch Room or in the Dining Room. Well, every well-appointed dinner is very much like every other well-appointed dinner, but while you dine your host tells you the past story of the place; and you listen—if for no other reason than that no other club has had a story at all like it.

The New Lyric is in some respects the successor of the once famous Lyric Club, though its present state is no more than a pale reflection of the glories that belonged to the older club. The Lyric occupied the same club-house—indeed, the building was opened in 1888 under the auspices of the Lyric. But the history of the Lyric went further back than that. Its germ was seen in those reunions Major Goodenough held many years ago in St. George's Square. At these there met together members of the aristocracy and of Upper Bohemia in friendly intercourse as on


TOM BROWNE
THE NEW
LYRIC CLUB.
SUNDAY NIGHT
11 p.m.

common ground—that was not so general a thing as it is nowadays. These reunions grew and broadened out, and the scene of them after a time was transferred to Park Lane. The next step was the formation of a club called the Lyric, with rooms in Bond Street. In 1888 the Lyric took up its abode in Coventry Street, and for a few memorable years the club, and the various entertainments it gave, were the talk of the town. And besides the house in Coventry Street, there was a country-house at Barnes, where during the summer there was perpetual festival. But alas! a dark shadow passed over the club, and it came to grief. As an interesting souvenir of the Lyric Club there is here reproduced, as showing the extraordinary activities of this club, the testimonial given to the secretary, Mr. Luther Munday, after the club had been wound up. It will be noticed that it is signed by prominent people, two or three of whom have passed away. The testimonial also tells, in condensed 'tabloid' form, the history of the club.

The Lyric Club.

Dinner over, you descend again to the theatre, where a smoking-concert is to be held. (Is there

something to be said for the man who declared that the Night Side of London life would be tolerable but for its smoking-concerts? Well, it all depends—which is about the only generalisation it is ever safe to make.) Members of the New Lyric dining in the club on Sundays have seats reserved for themselves and their guests, and your host pilots you to a capital place. The auditorium is fairly well filled, but could hold a good many more without any crowding; you notice also that the men are in a large majority, though the actual number of ladies (guests) present is considerable. All the male creatures are smoking—none of the ladies are, though upstairs at dinner, or rather after it, you noted all those charming beings had their cigarettes with their liqueurs and coffee. But then you have seen over and over again that ladies smoke in the big restaurants if they have a mind to, and no one thinks anything about it; that is one of the changes which has come about in the last few years. But this is a digression. Well, all the members of the New Lyric are smoking—they smoke 'all over the place.' You now look at your programme, and you find on it the names of some well-known entertainers, vocalists, reciters, mimics, and so on—and perhaps the names of some others which are not quite so well-known to you. For all that, the programme is excellent. Even if it were not, the numbers succeed each other quickly, and the whole show is over in a little more than an

New Lyric smoker.

A RECORD OF THE OLD & NEW

LYRIC CLUB

To the Secretary and subsequent Proprietor

MR LUTHER MUNDAY.

Who between 1887 and 1898 organized for the Club one hundred and eighty-five Musical Entertainments and by his personal influence won the gratuitous support of Six hundred and eighty Leading Artists of the Musical and Dramatic Profession.

He also produced forty three Plays and founded an Amateur Orchestral Society of Sixty Members.

In 1890 the Lyric Cricket Club played many Matches on the Club grounds at Barnes, and amongst other victories may be recorded that over the famous Australian Eleven.

In 1892 the Army Football Association played their final tie at the Club grounds.

The Oxford Eight defeated Cambridge in the years 1890 and 1892 and rested at the Club House during their training.

For four years the Club enjoyed the Privilege of Ascot and Lords

were the scene of hospitality to thousands of Members and Guests.

In 1899 the Club was overtaken by misfortune but many desire that the memories of days that are gone should be recorded in this form and given as a Memento to one whose pluck and tact made for the Lyric an indelible mark in Club history.

Londesborough — Henry Irving.
Edward S. Churchill — Arthur Sullivan
Suffield — Dorothea Baird
Winchester — Joseph Barnby.
Salisbury — Herbt Beerbohm Tree
Clement Ratcliffe — John Hare
Ernest Clements
Arthur Roberts — Geo. Ropsmith
Felix Goldsmid — Edward Rose
Charles Hawtrey — Augustus Harris.
Harry Nixon

hour—so you have not much chance of being bored, especially as refreshments of all kinds are ever ready to your hand. The concert at an end, the members and their friends move up to the various rooms, and chat till supper is announced. At two A.M. everybody goes off home.

CHAPTER XVI

A 'NIGHT CLUB'

. . . We were conducted by our leader to a place of nocturnal entertainment. . . .'—SMOLLETT, *Roderick Random.*

IT may be that when this book is published there will not be a single night club left in London; at the time this chapter is written, there undoubtedly is one, but it is believed to be the only one now existing in the town, and it may very well have disappeared long before these words meet the eye of the reader. The fact is that night clubs have practically become impossible, or almost impossible, in London, thanks to the ceaseless vigilance of the police, whose constant raiding of such dens has made keeping these places a dangerous, and therefore an unprofitable business. From time to time one is started, but it is quickly 'spotted' and suppressed. Only a few years ago there were many of them open, furnished with ball-rooms, bars, supper-rooms (which had a way of being turned into gambling-hells on the slightest provocation), and a bevy of painted ladies—the whole protected by bullies or 'chuckers-out.' A

Former night clubs.

few of these places of 'nocturnal entertainment,' as Smollett phrases it, were sufficiently notorious—perhaps the most famous, or infamous, was the 'Alsatians,' who had their rooms in Regent Street. The night club to which you shall now go calls itself a Supper Club—to it for the purposes of this chapter will be given the name of the Midnight Supper Club. Of course, that is not what it calls itself, but it will serve.

There is little use going to a place of this sort much before one o'clock in the morning. The restaurants and public-houses close, it will be remembered, on most nights at half-past twelve; it is after that time that the night club begins to fill up—so that it is apparent that the particular club to which you are going should be named the After Midnight Supper Club. You have set out with a general idea where the place is; you have been told it is somewhere off Tottenham Court Road, in that part of London, north of Oxford Street, and south of Marylebone Road, into which Soho has overflowed. And you have made up your mind to find it, and having found it, to gain admittance somehow or other. So you go your way up Tottenham Court Road, up and down which many people are still moving, notwithstanding the lateness of the hour. You cast a searching look up the side streets, until you come to one, in the midst of which is a long row of cabs. You wonder what are so many cabs doing here in this obscure street at this time o'

night, and then it strikes you that this is the street for which you are looking—the Midnight Supper Club is somewhere here or hereabouts. You walk slowly along one side of the street, stopping frequently and peering about. A waiter is standing on the steps in front of a building, from the windows of which the light streams, and fancying you have hit on it, you ask him if he knows where the Midnight Supper Club is; he stares at you somewhat superciliously or suspiciously or derisively (you never knew before that a waiter's face could express so many things!), and tells you he never heard of such a place! Afterwards you find out that he must have been making fun of you, for the Midnight, you discover later, is situated exactly opposite the very house on the steps of which that perfidious scoundrel stood and humbugged you. Just as you are wondering, not yet having tumbled to the true inwardness of the waiter's statement, whether you are in the wrong street, or if you will keep on trying here, you see a couple of ladies come out of a door on the other side of the street, and you watch them get into a cab and drive away. An idea at once comes to you, and you cross over to the cab-rank. As you do so, you hear one cabby tell another, 'There's a dance to-night at the Tivoli—that's where they're off to.' Further encouraged by this remark, you ask the cabby who has just spoken if he knows where the Midnight Supper Club is, and he replies, 'Yes;

The After Midnight Supper Club.

there it is!' and he points to the door out of which the two ladies emerged. So you make for the door.

It is here that your troubles really begin. You have found out the place, but how are you to get in? You are probably not alone, and you hold a hurried consultation with your friend or friends. A scheme at length is hit upon. One of you is to pretend that he has an appointment with a certain Mr. Smithson, whom he is to meet here. This one-of-you knocks at the door—the porter outside lets him do this much. The door opens cautiously; there are whispered words; the door closes, and swallows up the inquiring, greatly daring man. After a time he returns, and tells you it is all right. His friend, Smithson, is not inside, nor indeed is he known to those who watch over the Midnight Supper Club—which is not exactly astonishing news to you. But he, the friend, who has been carrying out this little scheme, has arranged with the secretary of the club to become a member; the payment of a guinea will admit him to all the privileges of membership for the balance of the year—among them the right to introduce friends free. The guinea is paid, and you enter, escorted by the New Member, negotiating successfully on the way no fewer than three barriers, each of which separately is quite strong enough to stop a rush, whether from inside or outside. The barrier next the door is a particularly stout one, being

Getting admission.

strengthened by bars of iron—you wonder if it is meant to check an invasion in force, say, by the police? Before you are allowed to get past the last barrier, your names are put down in a book, but it is highly probable that you have assumed *noms-de-guerre*: it is therefore unlikely that this book will ever trouble you again. At last you are made free of the night club, and you walk in.

The interior.

On the ground floor are three rooms, all brightly lit up. Nor is the decoration of them much amiss. A dado of dark-red runs round each room; above this is a profusion of mirrors, alternating with squares of reddy-brown paper; above this again is a frieze—of sorts. The general effect is undeniably pleasing and cheerful. The furthest room is a sitting-out room; the next has some chairs scattered about, but the chief thing in it is a bar; the third room is the dancing-room—it too has a bar, but it also has a piano. As you took your tour through the place, it so happened, perhaps, that the first room was empty. In the next, however, there were two or three men and as many 'ladies.' The latter were in evening-dress; they were behaving with the utmost quietness and propriety; they looked rather dull and more than a trifle bored—did these poor creatures, who are supposed to be the lures which draw men to the club. While you are making these sapient observations you hear the notes of the piano sounding from the next room, and thither you go. Here there are

NIGHT CLUB SCENE.

perhaps twenty people — eight females, all of the same class, the rest of course males, one or two of whom are in evening-dress, but the others in any kind of attire, you might say. Two couples are dancing a waltz—the sole music being that of the piano; the floor, which is covered with linoleum or some similar material, is not the best in the world, and there is not much enthusiasm or go about the dancing. Still it may inspire you. There is a good-looking girl in light-blue sitting by herself, and you move up to her, and ask for the honour. She dances beautifully. She tells you something about herself—does this poor child of the night. She speaks with a slightly foreign accent; indeed, she tells you that she is a German, and has been in England but a few months. The dance over, you ask if she will have some refreshment; and, wonderful to relate, she takes a lemon squash! She seems quite a nice quiet girl.

While you are having your drink—if you are wise you will follow the young lady's example, and take a lemon squash—you take another look round, and make some guesses about the people amongst whom you are. Two of the men have a striking resemblance to prize-fighters, and you surmise they are here—in case of accidents, let us say. Another man of a pronounced Jewish type appears to be a very prominent member of the club—you afterwards learn that he is the proprietor, and if you watch the women present very carefully you will

notice how eager they are to be first in his good graces. Others of the men lounge about the bar, while most of the women sit by themselves on one side of the room. In very truth, the scene is of the dullest. The music strikes up again, and you invite a handsome girl in black to dance. She accepts, and as you spin round you ask if she comes often to the place, and if it is always as quiet as it is this night. Yes, she tells you, she comes often, but this is not a good night—so many are away at other dances; generally it is very lively and gay. Is she English? No; she comes from Finland. (Nearly all the women, you find out, are foreigners.) On the conclusion of the waltz you ask your partner if she will have 'something'—and she also takes a lemon squash. She gently hints that she likes you very much, and will you take her up to supper? You are rude enough to say you've had supper, and the girl, who is probably well-seasoned to such rebuffs, turns away without a murmur. And so the night wears on. Everything is extremely decorous and unspeakably dull; were it not for the presence of these unfortunate women, it would be quite unremarkable in any way. And so far as you can see the rules of the club are strictly enforced, only members being allowed to purchase drinks.

The dancing-room.

CHAPTER XVII

THE NATIONAL SPORTING CLUB

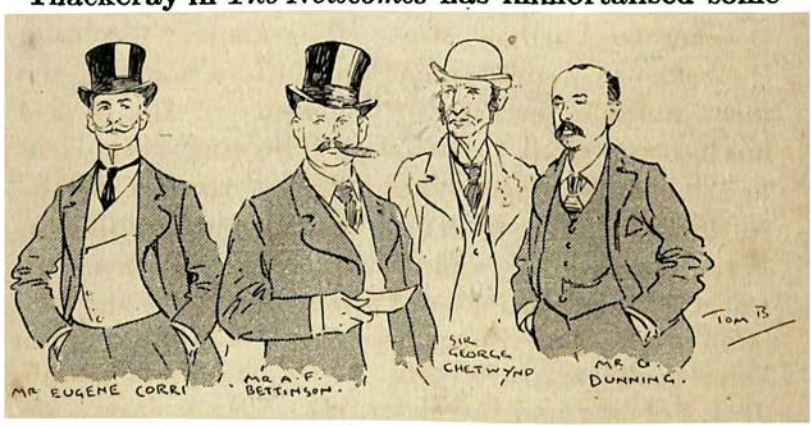
'There is absolutely nothing illegal in boxing itself. It is indeed a noble and manly art, which I hope will never die out of this country.'
—SIR CHARLES HALL.

THE club-house stands on the north-west corner of Covent Garden, and has something of a history. Time was when Covent Garden itself was the centre of the town, and its residences were tenanted by the nobility. In these days Bow Street was a fashionable promenade for beauties, great ladies, wits, and beaux. In the middle of the seventeenth century what is now the club-house of the National Sporting Club was the home of an Earl of Sterling; later, it was the house of the famous Sir Harry Vane. Still later, it was the residence of that Earl of Orford who was better known as Admiral Russell.

Its story.

But fashion moved away from Covent Garden and 'went west.' Somewhere about 1770 Russell's house was transformed into an hotel—it is said that it was the first hotel in London. It was a large affair, with accommodation and stabling for a hundred noblemen and horses. At the beginning.

of the nineteenth century the place was known as the Star—from the number of men of rank who frequented it. Coming further down the record, the building appears as Evans's Supper Rooms and Music Hall; still nearer the present time, it was a noted sporting-tavern where fights were arranged amidst much betting, whilst the evenings closed in it as the 'Cave of Harmony.' The genius of Thackeray in *The Newcomes* has immortalised some



of these entertainments. 'The scene of that chapter in which the Colonel rebukes the disreputable artist is laid practically in the National Sporting Club,' write the authors (Messrs. A. F. Bettinson and W. Outram Tristram) of the history of the National Sporting Club, a book published towards the end of 1901. 'The New Hall was built in 1856 from designs by Mr. Finch Hill, and cost £5000. Seconds invite competitors there now to a Magic Circle where seconds of another kind used to ask another kind of

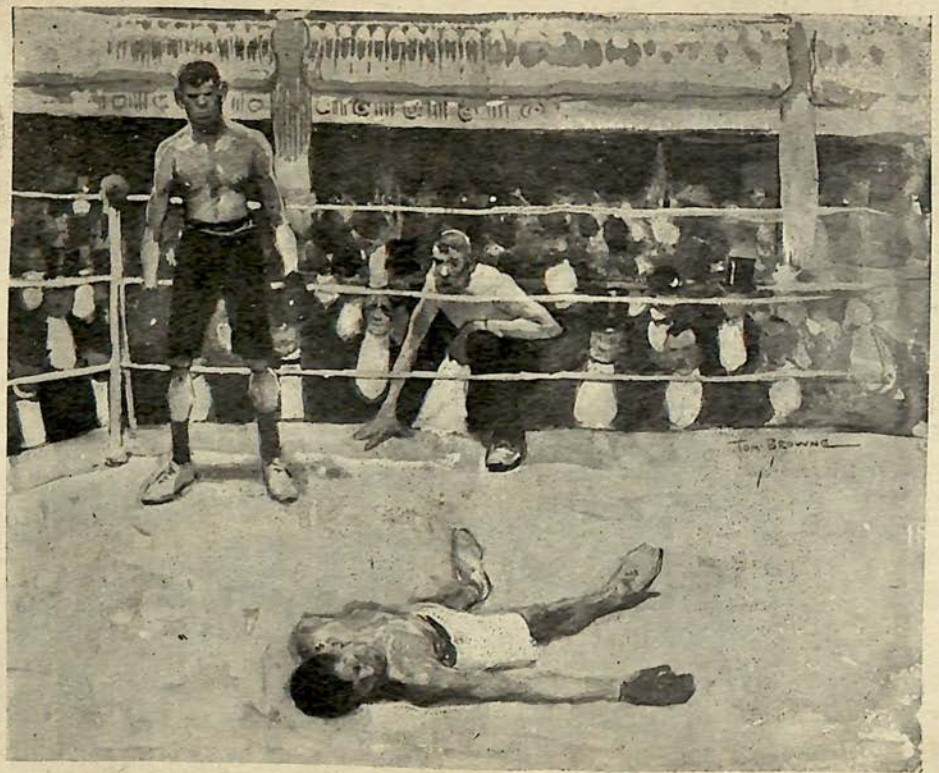
audience if they would come with them "o'er the downs so free." Glees have given way to gloves, and Bishop has been deposed in favour of Bettinson.' In other words, the National Sporting Club, with Mr. Bettinson as its manager, is now the principal centre in these islands of the 'Noble and Manly Art.'

The club has been in existence about eleven years, and its annual season—in which it has its boxing contests and competitions—is from September or October to April or May. Its 'theatre' has been the scene of many famous encounters, some of the most notable pugilistic Champions of the World having appeared in it. The following 'first-class fighting men' who have figured on the list of the National Sporting Club may be mentioned: Plimmer, Peter Jackson, Frank Slavin, Jim Stevens, Bill Corbett, Driscoll, Pedlar Palmer, Frank Craig (the 'Coffee Cooler'), Burge, Kid M'Coy, Kid Lavigne, Dave Wallace, Alf Wright, Jim Barry, Dido Plumb, Jack Roberts, and Harry Harris.

As is well known, some of the contests at the club have had unfortunately a fatal ending. Out of many hundreds of fights it was hardly possible not to anticipate something of the kind might happen. Presently you shall enter the club, see the doctor, Dr. Jackson Lang, one of the most genial and kindliest of men, examine the competitors, then you shall descend into the theatre, and behold the battles in the ring. First, however, you must listen to what Lord Wolseley, then Commander-in-Chief of the

Army, said at the club in 1899, when he was distributing prizes to certain soldiers who had taken part in boxing competitions. Lord Wolseley said: 'I am delighted with the very good boxing witnessed. Well do I remember this Hall (being older than most gathered here) when devoted to other uses, and a man with a fiddle was the entertaining subject. Everybody is now pleased to see it used for more suitable purposes. Magnificent specimens of humanity and well-trained athletes are constantly taking part in a noble game and affording amusement to the community. If I were to exempt the great use to our country of this gallant and noble game it would be unfair and unkind, for its usefulness is unbounded. I sincerely trust it may flourish, as such exhibitions are the true test of British pluck. The club has contributed largely to a much-needed want, and long may it continue to show its members and guests as good sport as it has done this evening. As military men we are all pleased to see such manly fighting, and under such conditions as have prevailed to-night it is especially adapted for soldiers when they have to fight, as sometimes happens on the field of battle, without arms. It is conducive to endurance and pluck, and makes men of them—the sort of men who alone can defend us against our foes.' Of course there are two views of boxing: one that indicated above, the other that it is an unmitigatedly brutal business. Equally

Lord Wolseley in praise of boxing.



FLOORED!

of course, the truth as usual lies somewhere between extreme views. And it is well to remember that in countries where boxing is unknown, the knife, the dagger, the stiletto take the place of the fists. And the evil, if evil there be, in boxing battles, it must be borne in mind, is reduced to a minimum at the National Sporting Club, where the utmost care and caution are exercised by those who superintend them.

But it is high time to take a look within the club. It is evening, and Covent Garden, which all day long has been filled with garden and market produce drawn from far and near and the vendors of the same, is hushed and still. You find yourself in the Entrance-hall of the club, and you notice the fine staircase, which formed part of the *Britannia*, 100 guns, flagship of Admiral Russell at the battle of La Hogue in 1692, handsomely carved with anchors, ropes, and other symbols. This Admiral Russell was no other than that Earl of Orford of whom mention was made in the opening paragraph of this chapter. You pass on into the Coffee Room, a large and comfortable chamber, its walls hung with sporting prints and portraits of celebrities and a series of sketches by 'Cee Tee.' In one corner of the room is the bar, and in the intervals between the contests and boxing matches you may see round and about it some of the greatest sportsmen of England, discussing events over foamy tumblers or tankards. And here, per-

The club-house.

haps, you may be introduced to the oldest member of the club, a hearty gentleman who tells you he is seventy-six and walks ten miles every day of his life; you borrow the happy phrase of Oliver Wendell Holmes, and congratulate him on being seventy-six years *young*! Young, heavens, yes! for he drinks from a great pot o' beer; you are filled with envy, as it is years since *your* doctor told you that beer was not for you and other gouty bodies. From the Coffee Room you move on into the Billiard Room, on the walls of which is depicted the story of the *Merry Wives of Windsor*. Beyond that again is the Theatre, and in its centre is the Ring—which is a figurative expression, for the stage on which the matches are fought out is a square. Expert opinion from all parts of the world has pronounced the Theatre of this club an ideal place for watching boxing, and, of course, for boxing too. On the occasion of a great contest the place is crowded with hundreds upon hundreds of gentlemen in evening-dress, all keenly watching the struggles in the Ring, between professionals or amateurs, as the case may be.

But first of all you shall go with the Doctor, Mr. Jackson Lang, and see those who are about to box undergo his examination; if they cannot pass it, they cannot appear in the Ring. This examination is of the most searching character, but as those who come up for the contests have all been thoroughly trained, it is not often that

THE · BAR
AT · THE
NATIONAL
SPORTING
CLUB.

any one is rejected. In the case of novices it is different. And here you shall be given a glimpse of something you are not very likely to see for

yourself, and this is the Doctor's examination of a batch of novices. Dr. Jackson Lang's room is not a large one; it is adorned, however, by some of the sketches of our mutual friend, Mr. Tom Browne.

While the examination is going on, a secretary sits in a corner, and jots down the names of the would-be competitors. 'Come along!' cries the Doctor, and there appears a giant from Ratcliffe. The Doctor looks at him, as he tells him to expose his body. 'Feeling well and fit?' asks the Doctor. 'Yes.' 'When were you ill last?' 'Never ill,' grins the giant. 'What's your weight?' And some other particulars are asked of the giant. Meanwhile the stethoscope is counting the beats of the giant's heart. 'Been here before?' asks the Doctor. 'Once.' 'Did you go through all the rounds?' or 'How many rounds?' the giant is asked, and his answer being satisfactory, and his heart found to be sound, he is dismissed as being 'all right,' and he goes off to get ready for the fray with a large and abounding smile. But the next man, who hails from Deptford or Kentish Town or from some other district of the town (your boxer, like certain lords, is always Jones or Smith or Robinson 'of' Somewhere), is perhaps not so fortunate. The usual interrogatories are put to him by the Doctor, who looks at him with a shrewd though kindly smile; the heart's action is examined; it is not what it should be. 'Come back after a while,' he is told; 'you are too much excited at present'—this is the Doctor's friendly way of intimating that this particular candidate for the honours of the Ring is rejected; after all the others, who troop one by one into the Doctor's sanctum,

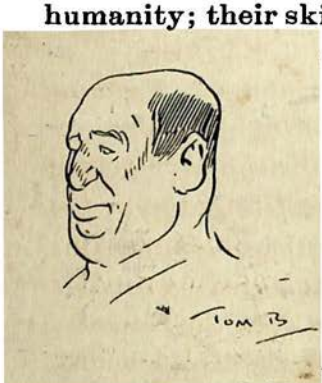
Passing the Doctor.

have passed, or not passed, he returns, as he does not wish to take the hint that has been given him, but this time he is told that he is not fit, and he retires in deep dejection. And so on it goes; the procession of novices defiles before the Doctor—there may be a dozen of them or more. Each of them has his peculiarities of dress and accent and appearance. They follow all sorts of trades and occupations: one is a carriage-painter, another is a sailor (his splendid chest is gorgeous with fine tattooings of Japan!), a third keeps a stall in the Borough, a fourth is a coster, a fifth is a labourer, a sixth a bricklayer, a seventh a soldier, etc. There are two things which are to be noticed: the thoroughness of the examination, and the class from which the novices are drawn.

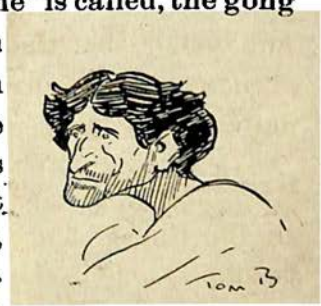
Enough of this. You are anxious to see the boxing-match, and you take your place on the floor of the Theatre, on the stage behind it, or in the gallery. In the centre of the stage behind the Ring are the referee and the timekeeper; on either side of it, or in such positions as give the best view of the operations, are the judges. The Ring is what is known as the twenty-four-foot ring; it is surrounded by ropes bound in cloth; in the corners are the seconds of the boxers, each having by him towels, sponge, and water for refreshing his particular man. Enter the contestants, attired for business; they put on the regulation gloves; the manager steps forward and announces their

names in a loud, clear voice; a bell sounds, and the boxers move into the centre of the Ring and shake hands. This is to be a contest of so many rounds, two minutes each, and the contest is decided by 'points'—that is, in the event of neither being incapacitated in one way or another. You look on at the first round, and it is not in human nature not to feel the excitement of the occasion. The fact is that there is nothing in the world more exciting than a first-class well-contested boxing-match. As you watch the two men fighting you mark their fine physique (and probably wish you were built on somewhat similar lines). They are good specimens of athletic humanity; their skins are like satin, and the muscles show up like knotted ropes. Then, as blows are exchanged, you wonder just what it means to stand up and receive them—and give as good as one gets, or better. It means pluck, courage, judgment, skill, as well as the clear eye and the sound body—all very excellent things. You look on, and if you are not already a partisan of one or other of the men, you find your sympathies alternating between the two as the fight

In the Ring.



goes on. If the contest is fairly even, the 'opening' will not be of the 'terrific' sort, but cautious, each man feeling for his chance. And as the chance presents itself, there will be 'straight lefts,' 'low body blows,' and 'sichlike' until 'time' is called by the timekeeper sounding his gong. The boxers, whose skin in places is turning from white to red, retire to their corners, where their seconds immediately treat them to rubbing-down, a taste of water, and much towelling and flapping of towels. A few seconds pass, 'time' is called, the gong sounds, and at it the two men go again. And so on through the various rounds, until one of them has established his superiority over the other. It is not often there is a draw, but it occasionally happens. The match settled, you return to the Coffee Room—for your coffee. Perhaps there is another contest, and you stop for it also.



One of the great features of the National Sporting Club is its concerts, at which the best talent appears. Its house-dinners are remarkably enjoyable functions—the Cave of Harmony returns to town again, but under much pleasanter conditions. At the concerts lady-vocalists frequently are to be seen and heard, and these are the only occasions on which ladies may get a peep into the club. Among these privileged performers have been Miss Cissie Loftus, Miss Louie

Freear, Mrs. Langtry, and Mrs. Beerbohm Tree. The appearances of these ladies were in connection with the *Referee's* Children's Dinner Fund, which the National Sporting Club, among others, took under its hospitable wing. The National Sporting Club has a very extensive membership, the most prominent among these 'Corinthians' of the twentieth century being Lord Lonsdale (President), Sir George Chetwynd, Sir Claude de Crespigny, Major-General Fox (Inspector of Gymnasia in the Army), Captain Bower, Captain Edgeworth Johnstone, Mr. C. W. Blacklock, Mr. Eugene Corri, Mr. Angle, Mr. J. E. Dewhurst, Mr. G. Dunning, and Mr. George Vize.

Modern 'Corinthians.'

CHAPTER XVIII

A SCHOOL FOR NEOPHYTES

'The defeated man had gained a great reputation from an initial encounter at Habbijam's.'

National Sporting Club, Past and Present.

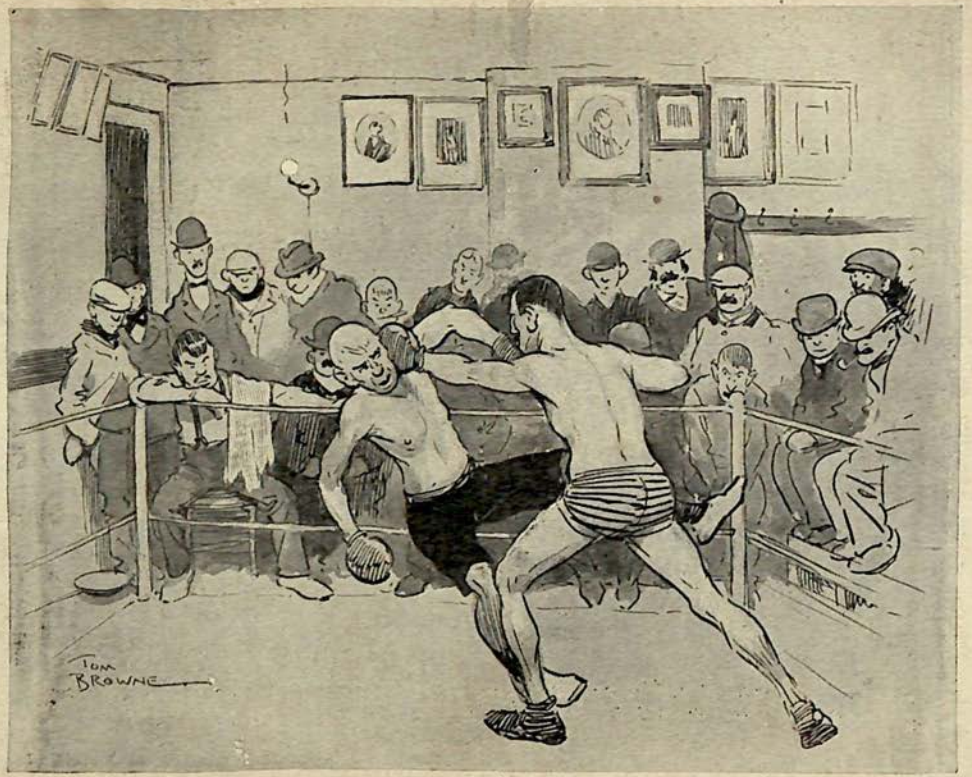
THERE are very few people interested in the Noble and Manly Art who have not heard of Bob Habbijam's School for Neophytes in Newman Street—perhaps the outside world may not know much about it, but most patrons of the Ring know it well; in its way there is no more famous establishment than Habbijam's. There you may see as fine exhibitions of scientific boxing as anywhere in London—and almost every night, though the gentle reader may not suspect it, several boxing-matches may be seen in one or more parts of the town. But, if you are interested in this kind of thing, you can't do better than look in at Bob Habbijam's, where you are pretty certain to get what the *Sporting Life* terms 'A Grand Night's Sport.' Well, you shall now spend a couple of hours there. You have managed to get the entrée. You find your way into a room of very moderate dimensions—so moderate, in fact, that the Ring

'A Grand Night's Sport.'

occupies pretty well the whole of it, there being just left space sufficient to allow four or five steep benches to be ranged against the walls on two sides of the Ring. Mr. Habbijam presides over the entertainment in person, and he takes good care that the combatants don't shirk their work, as you shall presently see.

Half a dozen events with gloves are to be run off this evening, you are informed, and having climbed with some difficulty into or on to one of the precipitous benches aforesaid, you take a look at the empty Ring, and then at the house—there are about seventy or eighty of Bob's patrons present, and they are of all ranks and degrees, the top and the bottom of the social scale on an equality, for there is no such leveller as Sport. Now you hear it announced that the first number on the night's programme is a Six Rounds Contest between a Paddington man and one from Walworth; hard on the announcement the men, accompanied by their seconds, enter the Ring, their 'decks cleared for action,' and excellent specimens, in all respects, you observe, of the boxer sect. No time is wasted. Habbijam's exists for business, and nothing else. In the first round the Paddington man gets the best on 'points,' by the aid of a very straight left in the face, but in the second round the Walworth champion returns the compliment, and plants a hard left-hander on the other's eye. In the third round the Walworth lad is sent down four times from very

A Six Rounds Contest.



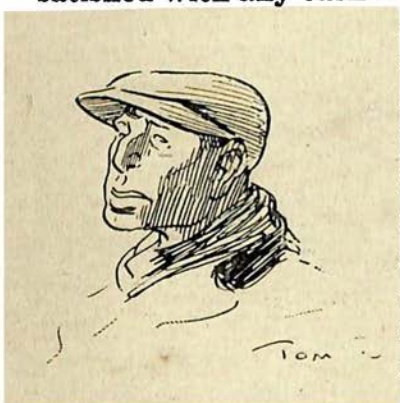
HABBIJAM S.

straight and hard left-handers in the face; however, he manages, 'tween-whiles, to get in a couple of good left-handed leads. In the next round he does better, and holds his own fairly well, but in the fifth he goes groggy. In the sixth he stands up gamely to the end, but the Paddington man wins. Both men, during the contest, receive much applause, and on its conclusion the loser gets as hearty cheers as the victor, for he has fought a good fight.

To this there succeeds another Six Rounds Contest between a representative of Bloomsbury and an Oxford boxer. It begins in a very fast manner, and involuntarily you hold your breath and open your eyes very wide, as the rattling blows follow each other in quick order. It is a contest in which both men work hard, dealing each other plenty of left-handers on the face, the head, ribs, and so forth. There is some 'tricky' fighting—meaning thereby that there is as much scientific avoiding of blows as well as giving and taking. In the end the decision is in favour of the Bloomsbury boy, but the Oxonian has done very well, and has no reason to be ashamed of himself. Indeed, both contestants have done so well that Habbijam promptly says they are lads to his liking, and offers them a purse of £20 for a Fifteen Rounds Contest, to be fought in three weeks' time; the offer is as promptly accepted. But the next contest on the programme is of a different kind, and meets with the proprietor's strong disapproval. In this fight another Bloomsbury warrior

is opposed by a man from Mile-End. They fight two rounds in a rather lackadaisical manner, showing small desire to hit out hard and straight. Their work is clever enough, but it is not 'meant.' So Mr. Habbijam steps forward and stops the affair, remarking, 'I pay my talent the highest wages of any one, and I expect a fair *quid pro quo* for my outlay. When I am not satisfied with any turn on the programme I stop it.'

A contest stopped.

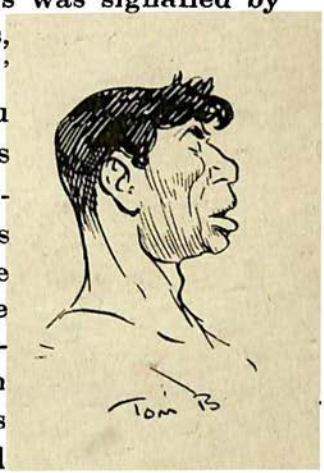


And stop this contest he certainly does. A prompt man is Bob Habbijam, as the following anecdote taken from the pages of the history of the National Sporting Club, already referred to in a preceding chapter, sufficiently attests—

'Tradition tells that Habbijam took as his partner one Shah Horne. A brass plate inscribed with the two names decorated the door of the famous establishment. A Contest took place, and on the junior partner devolved the duty of taking the money. He took it. But on the following morning £30 was not forthcoming. Shah (the fierce light of unusual responsibility having made him blind to the world) had not the least idea where the £30 was. It was probably in some Persian harem. He was asked to fetch it. But

while he was still on the quest of the Golden Fleece, a mysterious individual called Hedgehog (by reason of his spiky hair) was ordered to be ready with a screwdriver. On the reappearance of Shah, not bringing the shekels with him, a silent signal from Habbijam set Hedgehog to work on the brass plate. It was detached. It was cast into the street, and a new method of dissolving business combinations was signalled by these ever-memorable words, "That ends the —— partnership!"

Promptness.



So much by way of aside. You shall now see the last Six Rounds Contest, making the fourth provided for your entertainment this evening. It turns out to be the best thing you have seen. One of the rivals is a soldier, a lance-corporal; the other hails from Islington. The soldier tops his opponent by several inches, and seeks to gain an advantage by the impact as the Islington boxer comes rushing in. But the latter uses his 'fives' very cleverly and fast, and soon goes ahead. In the second round the corporal gives the other some hard raps on both sides of his head, and in the third round sends him to the floor with a hard right-hander on the jaw. Whether you like or dislike boxing, this is the kind of blow which wakes —you can't help it; it is involuntary—in you a

strange and most extraordinary savage thrill; it makes some primitive instinct quiver within you; something aboriginal yet horribly contemporary, so to speak, rises and asserts itself. There is a savage in all of us! And not very far away either. But the Islington man gets up from the ground; he is not done with yet. He delivers some telling blows on the region of the soldier's kidneys, and with effect. The fifth round has its varying fortunes, but the soldier's right eye is half closed, and the other man's upper lip is badly cut. Both men are a good deal distressed, but they stand up to each other well in the final; all declare it to be a splendid exhibition of courage, endurance, and skill. There is not much to choose between the two, but the soldier is declared the loser. Bob offers to put up a purse if they will try again, and the soldier says he would like to meet the Islington chap once more, but, alas! he is under orders to go to India next week, and so must decline. Bob and the audience express their regret, and hearty applause is given the gallant soldier boy. But what will his Colonel say to him to-morrow?

Floored!

You have now had your fill of fighting (vicariously) for one evening. Another night—in the next chapter—you shall see boxing at the East End at 'Wonderland'—a name which covers one of the most remarkable phases of the Night Side of London.

CHAPTER XIX

'WONDERLAND'

'East is East, and West is West'—but in London they have points in common.—*A gloss on Rudyard Kipling's line.*

'WONDERLAND' is in the heart of Whitechapel; from St. Mary's Station you can reach the place in a minute. The name, 'Wonderland,' can hardly be said to be descriptive in this particular instance, for 'Wonderland' turns out to be a gigantic building, formerly used as a music-hall, or for baby or beauty shows, but which is now the scene of boxing contests. The boxing to be seen there is well enough; as a matter of fact, 'Wonderland' has witnessed some of the best contests in London; but it is the place itself, with its illuminating glimpses into East End life, that is most vitally interesting. Let it be granted, as Euclid used to say, that you have selected a Saturday night—the particular 'Saturday night when 'Jewey' Cook and Charley Knock box an eight-rounds draw. You have found your way to the place, and you notice that there is quite a large crowd outside the doors; still the crowd is not waiting for a chance

A Saturday night.

to go in, but for news of the result of the battles taking place within. They have not the necessary shilling or sixpence that gives admission, but they have their sympathies, and they are anxiously expectant. You pass into the building—at the door stands a solitary policeman. You pay, perhaps, the highest price, three shillings, which entitles you to a seat on the stage. You have come a quarter of an hour before the time announced for the beginning of the first match, but the vast building is already packed, except on the stage, where there is still room. And what a dense mass of human beings there is! Probably there are two thousand men crammed into the space. Most of them are young—the great majority are between twenty and thirty, and nearly all of them are of the easily recognisable East End types, though there is to be seen here a heavier percentage of Jewish noses than is usual in an East End assemblage. The proprietor of 'Wonderland,' you see from the programme, is a Jew; one of the boxers, to judge from his nickname, is a Jew; and, quite unmistakably, your Hebrew of Aldgate is well represented to-night, and takes a keen interest in the ring and its doings.

The programme is a long one—you are to get plenty for your money; there are no fewer than ten events on the list: three eight-round contests, five of six rounds each, and a four-round 'go.' First of all, a competition for 9 st. 2 lb. men is begun. The crier of the events, a man with a strong, clear

voice, steps into the ring, and at his call six aspirants come out from the audience and stand in a line beside him. All about the ring is the hum of talk. Lads from Bermondsey are backing 'Tuzzey' Winters, the favourite of that locality, others are talking about the prowess of 'Old Bill Corbett' of Lambeth, while a third section canvass the merits of a champion from Bethnal Green. And so on; each boxer has his friends and admirers, his critics and his detractors, like greater folk in the bigger rings of the world. But there is no disorder; indeed, the orderliness of the crowd is remarkable, considering its extent and composition. And in all this great building there is not a single policeman to be seen! While you have been making these observations the competitors for honours in the 9 st. 2 lb. lot have retired. The seconds, with the usual paraphernalia, get into their corners. Two gladiators appear, and the crier introduces them to the audience with the most elaborate distinctness. 'Three rounds. Two minutes each. Between So-and-so of Lambeth and So-and-so of Poplar. On my right is So-and-so of Lambeth; on my left is So-and-so of Poplar.' And that there may be no mistake he points with stretched-out forefinger at each of the combatants in turn. Then the rivals set to work. There is some careful sparring, a free exchange of blows, some dodging, and suddenly one of the two gets in a swinging left-hander—down goes the other on the

A boxing competition.

floor as 'time' is called. A second round, and, before it is half over, the same man is sent to the ground again by a 'short left-handed jolt under the jaw'—to quote the chaste expression of the sporting reporter. The referee, seeing that the man on the floor is hopelessly outclassed, stops the match, giving the victory, of course, to the other. There are several more matches, until all are weeded out, from one reason or another, except two, who, it is announced, will come together again to decide the matter on the following Saturday. Next comes a final match in a competition between 8 st. 4 lb. men; it is without special incident.

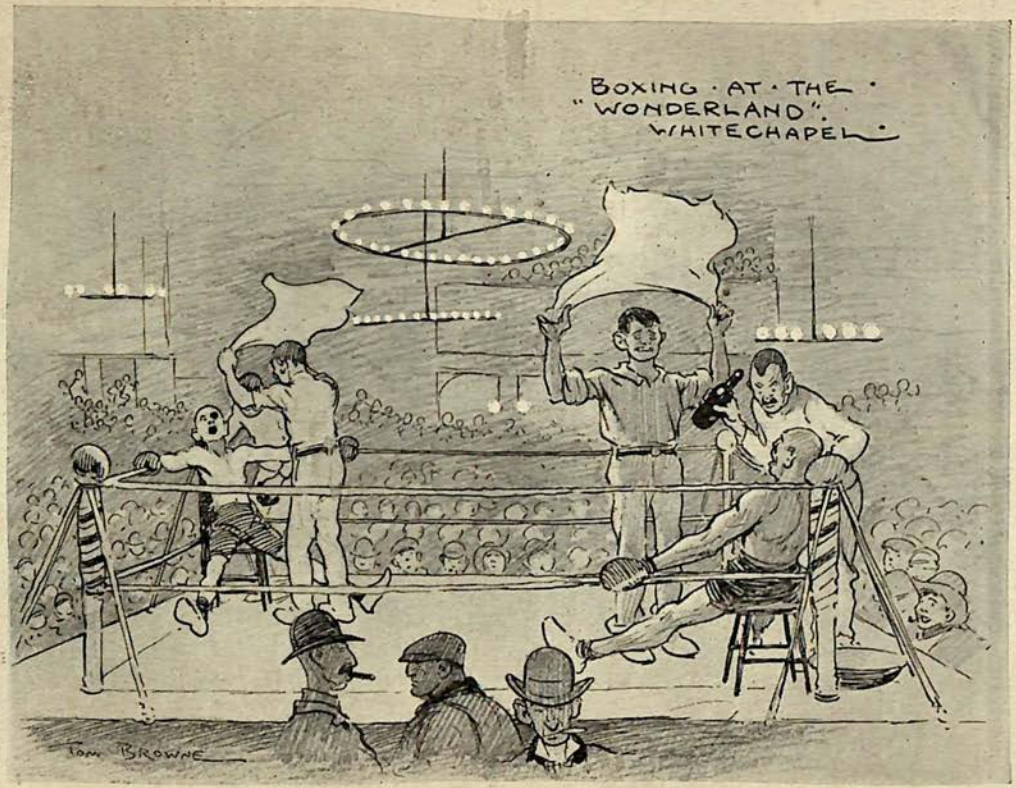
All this while you have been looking on from your seat on the stage, but your attention has been drawn off not a little by the persistent attentions of the vendors of refreshments who perambulate the place ceaselessly—in truth, they may be said to pervade it. The viands and other things they offer you smack of the locality in which 'Wonderland' stands. First on the scene is the purveyor of that greatest of East End delicacies, the stewed eel. 'Any toff (those seated on the stage, where the prices are highest, are necessarily "toffs") 'ave a bit o' jelly?' cries the man in your ear, just as you are most intent on the ring. 'Any toff 'ave a bit o' Monte?' (Monte, you guess, is the name of the *cordon bleue* who prepares the dish.) 'Any toff 'ave a bit o' jelly, six or three?' (The allusion to 'six or three' refers to the price

A bit o' elly.

per bowl.) And more than one toff patronises the Monte-seller. Hardly has he gone when a boy assails you with, 'Orange, good orange, good juicy orange! Want an orange? Good juicy orange!' The said oranges are handed round in a wash-hand basin of enamelled ware. To him succeeds another youth, carrying 'smokes' on a tray. 'Cigareets; good cigar, shag!' he chants and chants again in a piercing voice—'cigar-ee-eets, cigar-ee-eets!' And now bustles forward a waiter, and shouts out some mystic words, which you understand by and by, more from effect than cause, so to say, to mean that he wishes you to give him an order. What you really hear him say is, 'Sorders, any sorders, gemmen, sorders!' His desire for 'sorders' is gratified, but not to any very alarming extent. And after him there appears a man with ginger-beer and other 'minerals.' He has a sort of half-musical cry: 'Limonade, limonade, ginger-beer, or kola, kola, ko-la!' And all through the evening these itinerants come and importune you. They, their wares, and their cries form-

an integral part of as curious a scene as any in London.

The first six-rounds contest is now 'on.' A Mile-Ender is matched against an Aldgate boxer, but the former has the best of it from the beginning, though his opponent stands up to him gamely enough; the latter gets applause liberally, but the other gets the verdict. On this fight there follows what turns out to be *the* event of the evening; this is the contest between Charley Knock of Stratford and 'Jewey' Cook of Hammersmith. As they come into the ring there are cheers from every part of the building; evidently both have many friends, many backers; shouts of 'Charley' contend with shouts of 'Jewey.' Charley stands up, with his head thrown well back; 'Jewey' carries his bent well forward; of the two, the former bears himself the easier; there is something sinister in the pose of the other. In the first round Charley sets the pace very fast, and lands a hard 'left hook' on the 'Yiddish boy's' jaw. 'Jewey,' however, evens up matters with a sharp swinging right on the left eye of his competitor. But on the whole Charley has the best of the round. When the bell sounds (by the way, the bell is a particularly brazen gong) and the men retire to their corners, they are given thunderous applause from all parts of the house. And, indeed, applause, in spite of the efforts of the management to control it, breaks forth whenever Charley or 'Jewey' gets in a really telling blow.


BOXING · AT · THE ·
"WONDERLAND".
WHITECHAPEL
TOM BROWNE

In the next round 'Jewey' is very busy with his hands—so, for that matter, is Charley, and there is not much to choose between them. And the third round is also a pretty even one—Charley lands a couple of very hard right-handers on 'Jewey's' short ribs, but 'Jewey' retaliates on the other man's face. The fourth round is a fast and heavy one, and you watch it almost breathlessly. 'Jewey' adds a lump to the right optic of Charley, who responds by a hard hit on his man's nose and a terrific right-hander in t'other's ribs, amidst vociferous cheering for both rivals. The contest continues very even until half-way through the seventh round, when Charley nearly settles it by planting a terrible swinging right on 'Jewey's' face, which brings the latter to his knees. 'Jewey,' to the delight of his partisans, manages to get up, and fights on till 'time' is called. It is now the eighth round, and excitement runs high in 'Wonderland.' Both men receive attentions and advice from their seconds; then, having shaken hands, they set to once more. There is much hard hitting on both sides, but there is no decisive blow, no knock-out. The gong sounds, and amidst a veritable Babel the referee announces his decision—the verdict is a 'draw.' This, of course, satisfies nobody, and the whole house breaks into an indescribable uproar. For a moment it seems as if there were to be a gigantic row, but the tumult ceases as the crier steps into the ring, and throws

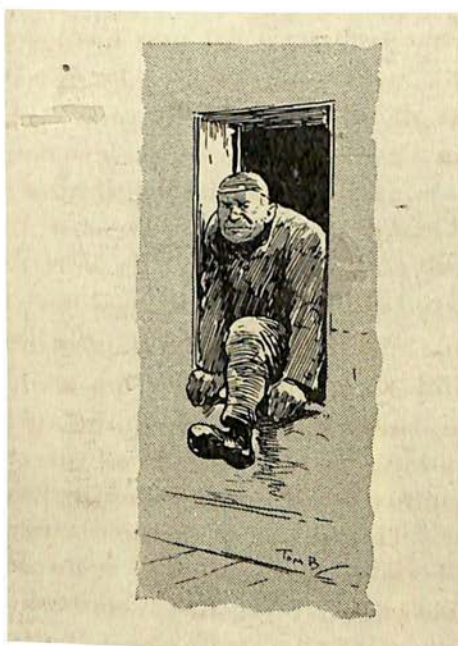
A fight which ends in a draw.

oil on the troubled waters by saying there was no disputing the decision of the referee — that was the invariable rule, as everybody knew. And he reminded them that the referee was strictly impartial. Moreover, there would be another opportunity for Charley and 'Jewey' to meet once more; the management would see to that. In the meantime, they had all witnessed a very fine display; the men were evidently very evenly matched, and there was not much difference between them. Whereupon the storm is calmed.

Other contests follow, but none is quite so interesting as that between Charley and 'Jewey.' As you drive home, you reflect on all you have seen, and perhaps wonder whither such a place as 'Wonderland' tends. Well, whither does it tend? And you must remember that boxing contests are constantly to be seen, as was said at the beginning of this article, in other parts of the town—for instance, in the Drill Hall at Woolwich, at the North London Baths, and at Lexington Hall, Golden Square. Perhaps it may help to answer the question if you consider the following quotation from a charge of Mr. Justice Grantham in a case where the authorities of the National Sporting Club were on trial for 'feloniously killing and slaying' a certain boxer. That is to say, the boxer in question was believed to have died from or as the result of a blow delivered in a contest at the National Sporting Club. 'It is much better,' said

A judge on boxing.

the judge, 'for a man to use the weapon God has given him, namely his fists, than the knife, because it is not so dangerous, and that is why a great number of people are fond of boxing. On the other hand it is very desirable that proper boxing under proper rules should be kept up; all people should not be afraid of using their fists when necessary. As long as man is human people will lose their tempers and wrongs will be done, and it is most desirable that Englishmen should never use another weapon, and never lose his temper, and always punish the man who is wrong.'



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CHAPTER XX

NEW YEAR'S EVE AT ST. PAUL'S

'Scots wha hae.'

TIME was (according to report, for which there seems to have been some foundation) when on any New Year's Eve on the steps of St. Paul's Cathedral, and all around that famous pile, there was a perfect Saturnalia of Scotsmen pledging, not wisely but too well, in the wine of their native land, themselves, their 'neebours,' and their 'auld acquaintance.' On the last night of the year of grace 1901, it was to be perceived that, while the festival of 'Auld Lang Syne' was still celebrated at St. Paul's, its reputed, aforetime character had been somewhat lost. Many of those who witnessed the proceedings bewailed that the affair had been shorn to a large extent of its former Bacchanalian glories, and that the Scot, who had formerly (dis)graced the occasion in considerable numbers, was now conspicuous by his absence. At the same time the scene was not wanting in a certain interest; and as there is still nothing quite like it in the story of the Night Side of London, you

Midnight, St. Paul's, 1901.

shall mingle with the crowd, listen to its humours, perhaps discover a 'brither Scot,' hear the great clock boom out the midnight hour, join in the query, 'Should auld acquaintance be forgot?' and try for the moment to forget that there are some people you think were much 'better dead.'

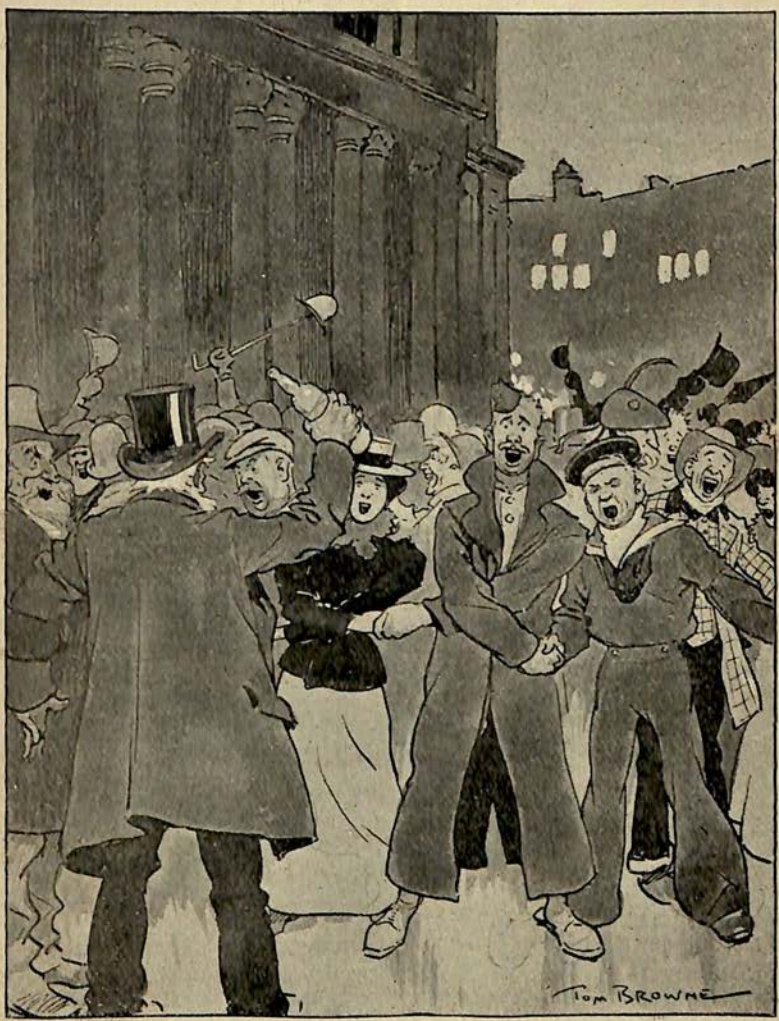
Like Johnson, you take a walk down Fleet Street, and then on up Ludgate Hill, until you find yourself on the confines of a crowd of people, a single glance at whom will tell you that you are in what is, for the most part, a gathering of young men and women, the majority of them belonging to the familiar East End types of beauty and fashion. And the voices you listen to are nearly all eloquent of Whitechapel and the territories thereunto adjoining. Hear and there is the accent of middle London—the true Cockneydom; in actual quality of tone it differs but little from that of Whitechapel —it too pronounces its long *a* as *i*, as, for instance, it persistently calls a lady a 'lidy,' but it is somewhat better educated, and stops short of such a word as 'garn!' And on the vagrant air perchance there comes the burr of Yorkshire. On a sudden you hear asked a 'Hoo's a' wi' ye?' and you know that the affair is not quite forsaken of the Caledonian, stern and wild. Only, he does not look at all stern, nor is he particularly wild. At least, not yet—but it is still some time to midnight, and John Barleycorn is a mighty power. And now, from the far distance, there reaches you the skirl of the

In the crowd.

pipes, mercifully modified and attenuated. But on the whole, at any rate at first, there is more silence than noise. Perhaps the reason for this may be discerned in the fact, which soon presses itself emphatically on your observation, that no inconsiderable portion of this informal New Year's assembly is composed of waterproof-caped policemen, standing 'two by two,' gazing about them in that good-humoured, tolerant manner which is characteristic of the London 'Robert.'

It is a cheerful scene—this you see in the light of the electric lamps, though the night is damp and overcast with dark clouds, from which there descends now and again a chill drizzle, a sort of heavy 'weeping' Scotch mist, in honour of the occasion perhaps. Underfoot the pavements and the roadway are deep in mud. Should a passing vehicle come your way, you will receive some generous splashes as its churning wheels go by. But in spite of these little amenities every one looks, or tries to look, pleasant. Above the sea of heads rises the grey and ghostly façade of the Cathedral—the columns in the foreground a shade less grey and ghostly than the much shadowed mass in the background. No light streams from the windows of the unbenignant, inhospitable, frowning building. The Church has no message to-night, save one of silence, for these her sons and daughters. Formerly there used to be a service held here at midnight, but the practice has been discontinued. Formerly also, the

Looking pleasant.



'SHOULD AULD ACQUAINTANCE BE FORGOT?'

wide steps of St. Paul's were open to the multitudes on the New Year eves, but to-night the former are railed in and the latter railed out. St. Paul's says, 'I have nothing to do with you, nothing to say to you, you children of the night.' Both of the discontinuances just mentioned may be necessary, but somehow one imagines that in other lands Mother Church would have coped with the revels of New Year's Eve in a less brusque and far more sympathetic, and even more forgiving, fashion. But St. Paul's stands and frowns the frown of obdurate respectability.

Yet notwithstanding the ban of the Church and the inclemency of the weather, the scene remains stubbornly cheerful, for the people remain stubbornly cheerful. You push your way into the crowd—it is not a difficult operation, thanks to its being broken up by the policemen as aforesaid. Perhaps you stop and have a chat with one of these keepers of the King's peace, and you remark that there is not much 'fun' going, and you say this in rather a disappointed tone most probably. Where, you ask, are the frolics you had reasonably expected to see? Where the meeting and the fervent hand-clasps of the Scotsmen of London? And you are told that perhaps you might see something of that sort at some Caledonian dance or another which is being held in another part of the town—thither, you hear, the choicer spirits have departed, and New Year's Eve, like so much else in

Before midnight.

London town, is not as it 'used to was,' so far as St. Paul's is concerned. Shall there be no more cakes and ale? you wonder; but even as you murmur this your attention is caught by a group of young sailors, talking and laughing together. The names of their ships are emblazoned on their caps, and you notice they belong to different vessels. Perhaps, you think, they are Scottish lads come to forgather with their countrymen, but their speech is not that of the North. Another thing you observe is that while they are good-humoured they are perfectly sober. And in another minute there is the sound of a concertina—the most popular of all street instruments in a crowd—and, hey! the jolly tars are at it, heel and toe, footing the hornpipe right merrily, while the crowd look on and roar encouragement. At one side of them stands a man in bonnet and kilts, and he may or may not be a Scotsman, you think doubtfully, for the cowl does not make the monk, but you hesitate no longer when you hear him cry, 'Ay, ay; they're nae that foo—nae foo at a'!' as he half-disapprovingly regards the dancing Jacks. You move on a few steps, and now you are beside the railings of St. Paul's, the unkindly railings that shut in the broad steps of the Cathedral. And here you behold some swift interchanges of certain black bottles from hand to hand, and from mouth to mouth. 'Auld Kirk' it is—Glenlivet, Talisker, Lagavulin, what not — and the 'wee drappie' circulates.

The clock is on the stroke of twelve. There is some faint singing of sentimental songs, such as are to be heard in every similar crowd, but they are Cockney ditties every one, smacking all alike of the music-halls. Then there is a sudden silence—in a way the instinct of the crowd is remarkable. A big group forms, and as the first stroke booms forth these Scottish exiles from Whitechapel sing together 'For Old Long Zine'—at least, these appear to be the words of the song. But mingling with these voices are the deeper notes of the genuine thing, 'Should auld acquaintance be forgot, and never brocht to mind?' The clock booms on, and from somewhere over your head there is the quick spurt and flame of an impertinent flashlight—and you realise that you have been photographed, willy-nilly. You are not the only

Midnight.

chiel amang the crood takin' notes, an' faith! he'll prent 'em as well as you. It is at this instant that a grisly suspicion slowly takes possession of you—and, likely enough, annoys you more than a little. You saw the big group form and begin its song; the group was formed, and the song was sung—well, not to say good-bye to the Old and to welcome in the New Year, but to afford that flashlight photographer his opportunity, and furnish some Barnum of a journalist with 'copy.' You have been tricked! At first you resent the thing, and then you laugh. 'Everything goes!' You 'can't 'elp but smile,' as you realise you have, as it were, been 'given away with a pound o' tea!' But the sentiment of the New Year's Eve!—Oh, hang sentiment; let's 'lorf.'

But is the whole sentiment of the scene merely a thing made and manufactured for selling in parts? Who knows? Still, here, at any rate, comes a piper through the crowd, and at his heels a rabble. See how he blows with distended cheeks into his pipes, how proudly he clasps them, how gaily he marches along, swinging with the swing of the music, piping as if his life depended on it! Hurricanes of Highland reels and strathspeys sound in your memory, perhaps, as he passes by; visions of the Highlands and the Islands—deep-sunken glens shadowed by silver birches, broad-bosomed lochs with deer drinking on the marge, hills of purple rising fold on fold to the radiant line of sky, lonely shores of firths shrinking far inland

'The Piper o' St. Paul's.'

from the ocean, the quiet of the clachans and the silence of the sheilings, grey villages and towns and

cities by the rivers and on the coasts, beside the grim kirks the green graves of the heroes and the martyrs of the race—all the music, and the poetry,

and the deathless romance of a people rise and fall, and rise again like the waves of the sea, as the piper goes piping by—rise and fall and rise again in all true Highland hearts, as he blows his heart and puts his soul into his music. It is not, you know very well, great music, really fine music—there be many who will tell you that it is the least musical music in the world—but it goes to the head, and the heart, and the *feet* as does no other. So behind this London piper, marching, marching, marching, down Ludgate Hill and up Fleet Street, goes the whole crowd from St. Paul's. It is a lively quick-step he is playing, the crowd steps to it like a single man, and so, through the drizzle of the rain and the sludge of the street, it moves on and on into the New Year.

After so much sentiment, you naturally turn into the Press Club, where you speedily and, perhaps, effectually damp it. But sentiment was always a thirsty business!

CHAPTER XXI

THE HOPPERS' SATURDAY NIGHT

'A-roaming we will go.'

A CURIOUS though passing phase of the Night Side of London is to be seen towards the end of August, when the hop-picking season begins—the time when a vast army of East Enders take their annual holiday. Every year thousands of men, women, and children from Whitechapel and Southwark make their way from the great city into the pleasant land of Kent, where the ripe hops, in long lanes of green and gold, stand waiting for the hand of the picker The Saturday night of the exodus sees some extraordinary scenes at the railway station from which the majority of the 'hoppers' depart—scenes full of the most genuine human interest, humorous, pathetic, lively rather than thrilling, but certainly richly coloured by the tragi-comedy of life. Formerly the hoppers made London Bridge station the centre of these scenes, and there was a sort of dramatic propriety in London Bridge, with its historic associations, being a starting-point. Now it is from the Southwark station, Blackfriars Bridge, that the hop-pickers

The East End exodus.

descend, like clouds of locusts, upon the 'gardens' of Kent. As a matter of fact, the hoppers had very little to do with the change—the omnipotent railway company 'fixed it all up.'

Not that it is only by rail that the East End goes on this annual excursion. Those who own, or who can beg, borrow, or steal, a pony and van or a 'moke' and barrow, travel down to Maidstone and the hop country by road—these be the aristocrats among the hoppers, for there are social distinctions amongst them, 'and what for no?' as they say in North Britain. The Whitechapel family that drives in van or cart to the hop-fields is proudly conscious of going there in style. But few of the hoppers, however, can experience this luxury of feeling. A goodly number of them, indeed, cannot afford the railway fare even, and have to fall back on that useful animal called Shanks' mare. Still, somehow, anyhow, whether it is by road or rail, fifty thousand East Enders get themselves out of London town.

The march of the hoppers.

The scenes which may be beheld as the hoppers march along the Dover Road are picturesque enough, but for light and shade, for complete scenic effect on a great scale, as in the staging, so to speak, of some gigantic Beggars' Opera, Blackfriars Bridge must be seen on the hoppers' Saturday night.

Long before midnight streams of people have been flowing towards the station, but it is about that time when the most impressive pictures may be

viewed. Stand for a moment, say, in Ludgate Circus, and then walk up the road and on across Blackfriars Bridge. And you will see—what you will see. It will be something like this. The bridge is in a half-gloom, and the partial darkness adds a touch of suggestion and a hint of mystery. The air is perhaps windless and still, but the sullen roar, which is London's voice by day, is not yet hushed. As you note the figures that flit about in the shadows, your eyes fasten themselves on a procession, small, but typical, moving slowly alongside the left parapet. You could not have hit upon anything more characteristic than this little procession, though it is only one of many similar processions. Your gaze may stray away from it for a second in search of other objects of interest, but it will inevitably come back to it; it is exactly what you have come out to see—at any rate, here is the beginning of it. For this little procession is a procession of hoppers.

A little procession.

'Hark! hark! the dogs do bark; the beggars are leaving the town!
Some in rags, some in bags, and some in a velvet gown!'

Is it so? Not quite. Take a good look at this procession of the hoppers. It consists of some fourteen or fifteen males and females—souls, the polite authors of another day would have been good enough to call them.

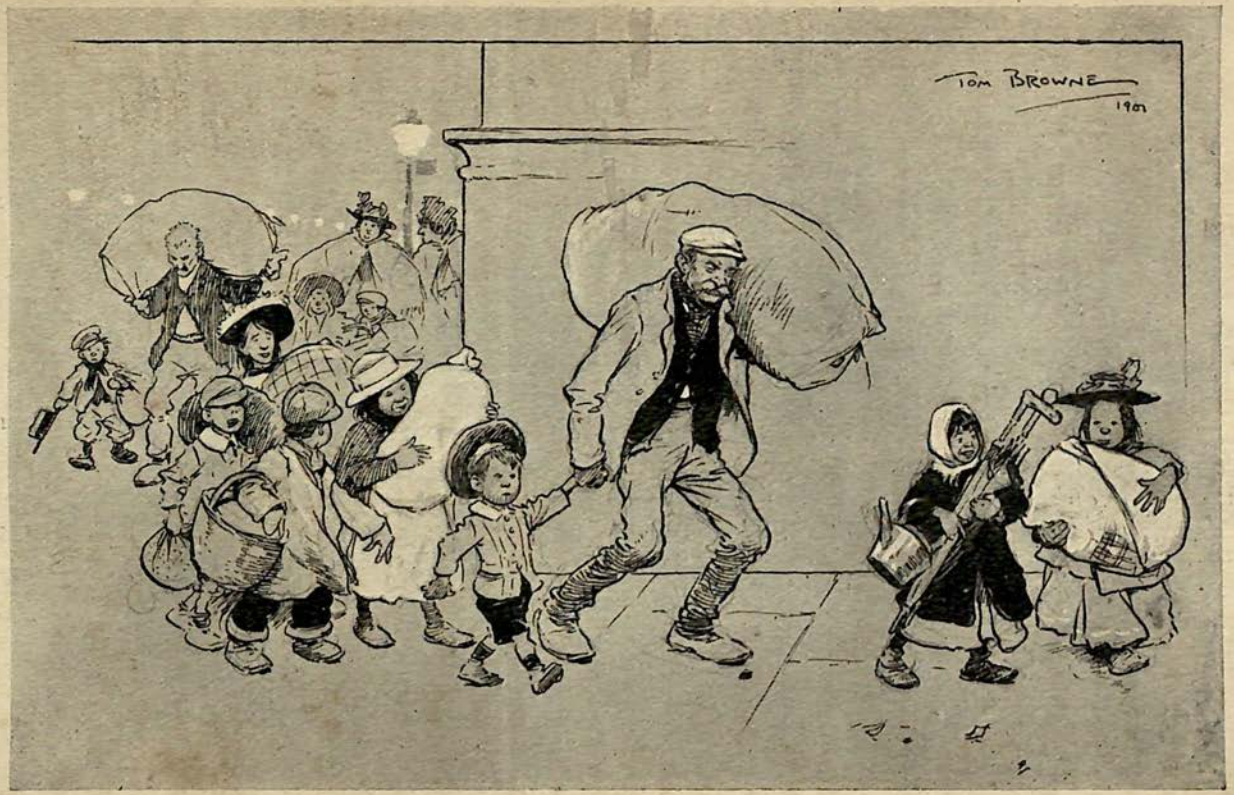
In its van are two small old women; their years six or seven; yes, they are already old, preter-

naturally old, for slum life has left its aging mark upon them. But if you could look into their eyes as they walk along the bridge (for them no Bridge of Sighs just now) you would see the light of hope and happiness shining in them. Nothing in the world can ever make them young again—it might well be they were born old; now they are anticipating with delight unspeakable three or four weeks in the country under the open sky—a period of delicious vagabondage—'Oh, sich larks—a reg'lar beano!' And the small hearts are as big with joy as they can hold. Both of these little old women carry burdens; this is to be no holiday of mere idleness. One has two umbrellas and a bright new kettle, the other a large package, bulging with a nondescript collection of God knows what. And thus they head the procession for the promised land under the bright star of hope.

Two old women aged six or seven.

Two or three feet behind them comes a man. On his left shoulder is a great sack, a veritable hold-all, cheap but excellent, filled wellnigh to bursting with all manner of household stuff. With his right hand he leads a small urchin of three. The little chap no doubt is tired; he has probably walked miles from his home in Mile-End or further east, but he walks gamely on, his steps three to two of his father's, without a murmur—he too has the beano and the green fields in his mind. Now, take a good square look at the man. He, you can see, is the real leader of

The leader.



YOUR EYES FASTEN THEMSELVES ON A PROCESSION

the expedition. He is dressed in moleskins; they are worn, work-stained, but not ragged. His face is good-humoured, and the smile he turns on the trotting child is only partially alcoholic. In fact, he is a favourable specimen of the hopper, and your instinct tells you he is not a bad sort. You guess his ordinary business—he may be a dock hand, a 'labourer,' or anything in the East End. Now he is out for his holiday, a holiday of work, it is true, but still a holiday, and he means to enjoy every moment of it. You see he and the child are quite happy.

At his heels are four children of various ages, boys and girls 'assorted.' Each of them carries something—pots, pans, a jar, packages, and so on. They don't talk much—they are too tired for one thing, but they march on steadily towards the big station whence they are to depart for the fields of Kent. The next figure is that of a man, and on his shoulder also is a sack exactly like that of the other man in front. You can tell at a glance he is not such a good fellow as the first. He carries his sack clumsily and as if under protest; he carries it heavily in his mind, you may be sure, as well as on his shoulder. Now and again he throws the sack down with a very audible curse, but soon he picks it up and moves on after the rest. He is disposed to be somewhat quarrelsome, and you guess he has already had as much drink as is good for him. His idea of a holiday is to go on

Figures in the procession.

the spree—on the 'boose,' he would call it—and he is going on it while he may. He is not very drunk yet, but he cherishes a sure and certain purpose to be more so. By his side runs a small boy, holding in his hand the man's straw hat; in his other hand is a bundle. Next come two or three more children, all tired, all laden, but all jogging, jogging, jogging on and all happy, as you cannot fail to understand. Last in the procession appear two shawled, stout, elderly women—the mothers these of the children; and as they bring up the rear, they keep a keen watch on the advancing flock for stragglers, but there are none save the second man with a sack. He is the bad boy of the party, and so is inclined to be 'obstropulous.' The two women don't pay much attention to him. With all imaginable gravity they walk along the pavement, carrying large packages, in which perhaps are the 'things' they value most. They are deep in talk, discussing their men, it may be, or their children, or sharing the gossip of their quarter, and possibly, very possibly, improving upon it. Their language is not exactly that of the West End; it is, truth to tell, saturated through and through with expressions and ideas which are not precisely literary or drawing-roomy, but the kind of subjects they pass under review are not very different from those most often on the lips of the greatest of great people, for the human nature of the East End is as like the human nature of the West as are two barleycorns.

The procession wends (the only member of it who really *wends* is the bad boy, but any well-regulated procession is supposed to *wend*) its way across the bridge, the behaviour of the little old women who form the advance-guard being in particular beyond reproach. When the South-

THE WOMEN AND THE CHILDREN DRINK GENEROUSLY (p. 290).

wark side is reached, the second man, otherwise the bad boy, throws down his sack, grumbles at the two women, who reply in kind, about the weight of the blankety sack he has to carry, and says he must have a rest. This is not quite what he says, but it is near enough. He is left behind by

all except his small hat-bearer, but presently he shoulders his burden once more, and staggers on.

The half-way house.

In another minute all halt unanimously in front of a flaring 'public,' the first they have come to since we added ourselves to their company. It is a sort of halfway house between the bridge and the station. The two men go in, while the women and the children sit down in a huddled group on the pavement before the door. A few seconds go by, and then the men emerge with huge foaming jugs of 'four-ale,' which are passed round; the women and the children drink generously and luxuriously; it is all part and parcel of the beano.

And now there is no lack of companions, for the roadway is black with hoppers and their friends. The number of them goes on steadily increasing; as some drift off to the station or the next public-house, fresh arrivals take their places. Most of the hoppers are on foot, but a few come in vans. It is a good-tempered crowd; there are jokes—most of them older than the hills, a fire of chaff of a homely but hard-hitting variety, shouts of laughter, a snatch of song—'Only one Gel in the World fur Me,' the cacophonous squeaking of a cracked concertina. You can see there has been plenty of drinking, but there is not much drunkenness; few or none have reached the squabbling stage. The most intoxicated hopper is far and away the best-dressed man in the whole lot; he is so well dressed that you wonder what on earth he is doing here. But what will

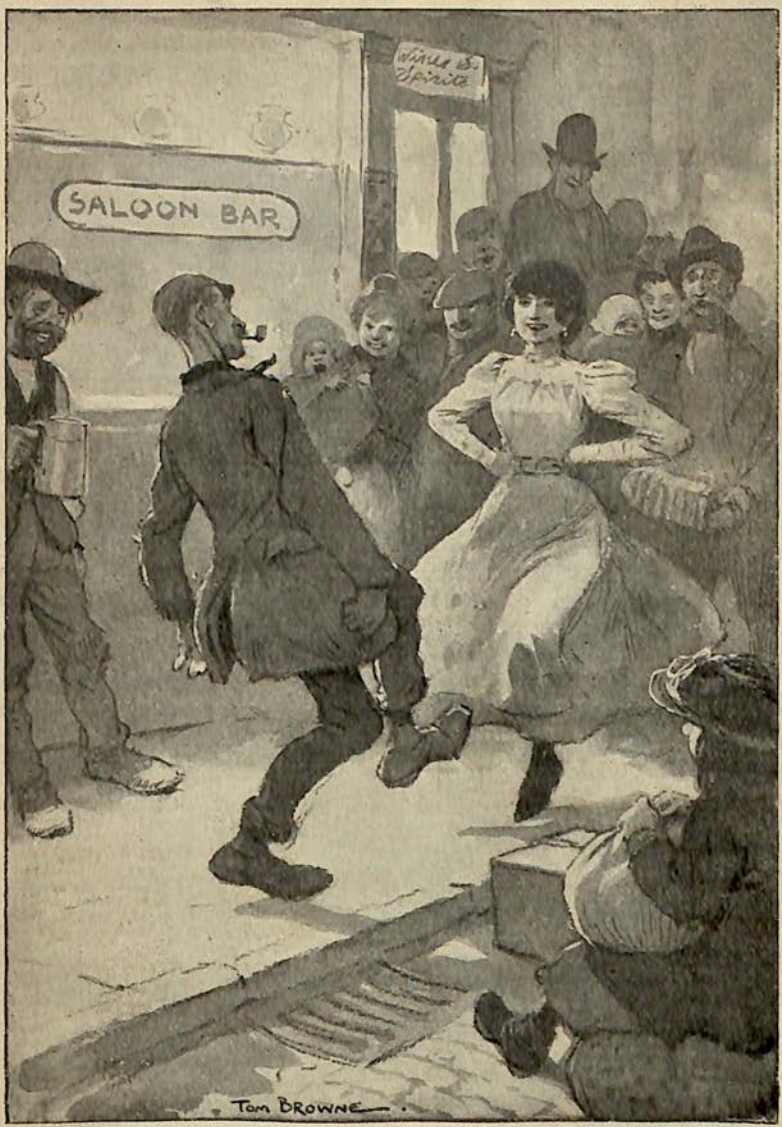
impress you most is that there is no disorder; then the picturesqueness of the scene will grip you. For it is a picturesque scene this, in the not too well-lighted street, and undoubtedly the darkness helps, covering up the rags if there are any, blurring with kindly obscuring hand the lines hunger and poverty have worked into pale thin faces, causing a loss of detail in the whole picture, but a broad richness of general effect. The darkness rubs some of the weariness and tiredness out of the faces of the little children; you know the mites must be worn out, and their presence makes for pathos. But otherwise the main note of the occasion is one of festival. Undoubtedly there is happiness here in the street among the hoppers, nor is that happiness by any means entirely alcoholic. There is plenty of fun, and, considering the circumstances, it is of an astonishingly quiet pattern. But a little further along the road to the station, and we happen upon a scene of broad humour.

The happy hoppers.

The street has now widened into what might by courtesy be termed a square, and across it the gleaming windows of two 'pubs' face each other. The place is full of people—some of the people are 'full' too, and the pubs are crowded. It is now getting on to the 'Hour of Closing,' 12.30, and every one seems pretty intent on getting out as much of the flying moments as he can, and, at the same time, getting into himself or herself as much as he or she can hold. There is a special attraction,

however, in front of one of the pubs, and like many of the hoppers we stand and 'take it in.' A couple of hoppers are dancing on a narrow strip of pavement to the inspiring strains of a wheezy concertina played by another hopper; the pair are encompassed by spectators, who shout words of encouragement and approval. The lady of the pair dancing is a 'fine, upstanding wench,' a by no means bad-looking 'gel.' She is dressed rather better than the majority of the other young women about, and sports a new, blue blouse. She dances with a certain rough gracefulness, and with amazing vigour. Her black eyes are snapping fires. Every line of her betokens enjoyment. See how her body swings and sways to the unmusical music. She is having a good time, you bet. Her partner is a young man of her own class—perhaps he is *her* young man, perhaps not; but subsequent events seem to support the former conjecture. The young man wears somewhat of a sheepish look as he foots it a trifle awkwardly on the kerb, but 'Lizerunt,' or whatever the young woman's name is, looks at him with keenly resentful glance if he shows any sign of weakening or stopping. At last, the challenge of these eyes becomes intolerable, and he springs forward and puts his arms round the fair damsel's neck. 'Garn!' she cries, pulls herself away from him, and smacks him hard on his face. The spectators grin and shout, but it is only a love-spat. The girl goes on dancing as if nothing had occurred,

The 'gel' in the blue blouse.



SHE DANCES WITH A CERTAIN ROUGH GRACEFULNESS.

and such playful little amenities as these are common features of East End courtships. The harder the hitting, the greater the love! And appreciating this thoroughly, Mr. 'Enery 'Awkins stands up to the girl again, and begins anew to do his shuffling steps on the pavement. And now you notice he warms to his work—Lizerunt's slap has done that much. Forward and backward the couple dance; they join arms and swing together; then they line up and at it again. And so it goes on for a short space of time. But this is not enough for 'Enery, and after one or two turns more, he moves forward with a jump, throws himself upon her, encircles her in his arms—the operation has been something of the suddenest—and both fall to the ground with the time-honoured 'dull thud.' At least you imagine there must have been a dull thud, but you cannot hear it for the laughing shouts of the onlookers. Then 'Enery and Lizerunt melt into the crowd, having covered themselves with glory. They have had a big gorgeous mouthful of Whitechapel delight; you may be certain they go to the station mightily well pleased with themselves. Hai, tiddley, ai! tiddley, ai! tai, tai!

With the shutting of the public-houses the motley crowd takes up its miscellanea of sacks, bags, pots, pans, and other etcetera (including in one case the family cat), and makes for the station, which is close at hand. At the entrance on the street a barrier has been erected, and we are asked if we intend purchasing a ticket. We explain to the guardian

of the gate, who has evidently been fraternising with the hoppers—examining their jugs perhaps—

The station.

that we are pressmen and have come to look on. He smiles indulgently (in a double sense), fobs a tip, and we pass on to a second barrier, topped with sputtering gas-jets. But here we are stopped by a remorseless railway inspector, who tells us we can go no further unless we have tickets. One of us (the present scribe—in the Name of the Prophet!) tries him with the 'pressmen' statement, but it is as clear as daylight he does not believe it. He may have some grounds for his incredulity, for the one of us before-mentioned has got himself up as an East Ender, and his make-up is too good; the other of us is not wearing his go-to-meeting clothes either. We are objects of suspicion, but we endeavour to reason with the official. 'No,' he says decisively, 'you can't get in without tickets. Come to look on, have you? Well, we don't want the platform lumbered up with people looking on; there will be plenty without that sort.' And he snorts derisively. We expostulate, but in vain. 'I don't see it,' concludes the inspector. So we go back to the first barrier, tell the man on guard there our difficulty, but he can do nothing for us except buy us a couple of tickets. The tickets are two shillings each, and are good for any part of the hop country—Aylesford, Snodland, Hawkhurst, Maidstone, Tonbridge, and Paddock Wood. At length both of us find ourselves on the platform, but we have a resentful sense that the railway has scored

off us. However, a day will come. Yuss, it will. The South-Eastern-Chatham-Dover combination had better look to themselves.

Yet the money for the tickets was well spent. The scene on the platform was an astonishing one, and of curious interest, like all the rest of the hoppers' Saturday night. On the right hand of the platform was a long, dingily lighted train, entirely composed of third-class carriages, from which all cushions and other upholstery had been stripped, a liberal top-dressing of strong disinfectants having taken their place. The train is a long one, and on the further side of the platform, across a yard, are another platform and another train. Five of these hoppers' 'palace' trains (*trains-de-Chloride of Lime*) left Southwark that night, each carrying about five hundred passengers—not a bad night's work for the railway company. The hoppers come pouring in. Already the carriages nearest the end of the out-going train are filled. You look in as you pass, and you see in each compartment a family and its belongings—father, mother, children, sacks, bags, pots, pans, all as hereinbefore indicated. The elders dispose of their paraphernalia so as to make the compartment appear incapable of holding an atom more; two or three of the youngsters lean out of the window so as to block it. A party of half a dozen now come along; they are decidedly 'under the influence,' and they sing a sentimental song as they get into a carriage—

The departure platform.

it is 'Break the News to Mother,' and they feel simply glorious. Presently we behold the procession we watched across the Blackfriars Bridge trudge on to the platform—the two men, the two women, the array of children. They fill up two compartments. What the bad boy has been doing since we met him last we don't know, but there he is—safely gathered in. More and more hoppers—ever more and more hoppers appear, among them the young lady of the blue blouse, who half an hour earlier was dancing on the pavement before the Yellow Cow, or whatever it is named. She gets into a carriage with her friends and little lot, and then hangs out of the window, chaffing the passers-by. In the carriage next the engine is a gang of lads and boys; they are shouting lustily, in all sorts of voices, 'Shike 'ands an' let us be friends; wot's the use to quarrul,' or words to that effect. A few minutes more, and the train pulls out of the station amidst cries and cheers. The stragglers who have not succeeded in

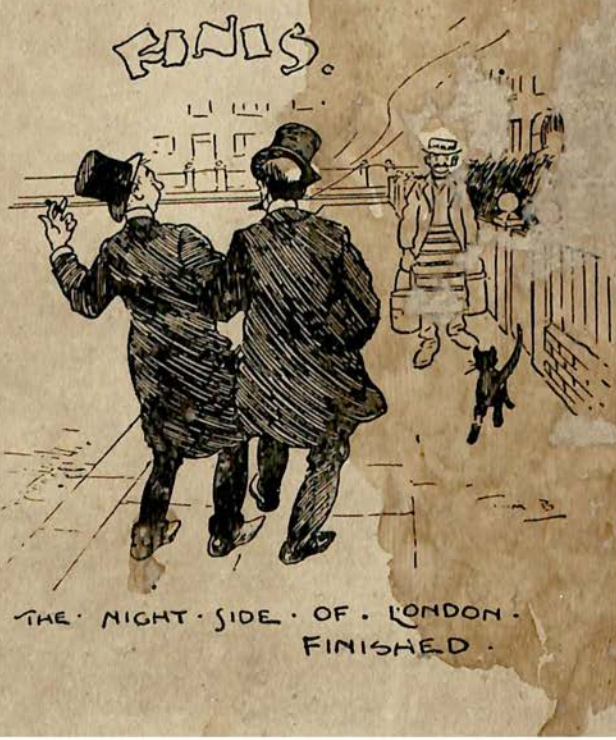
THEN HANGS OUT OF THE WINDOW.

getting seats make a rush for the other train—and so the thing goes on till the last train leaves and the station is closed.

As you depart you will observe that the station, now deserted, is beyond peradventure the barest, dreariest-looking place you have ever been in. Every portable article has been removed from it; even the two large weighing-machines, its sole furniture, have been boarded up as if to prevent any idea of their being taken away. There is a reason for all this. The hop-pickers are not pickers of hops only—there you have it. Now listen to a tale that is told of the gentle hopper. Once upon a time there was a benevolently disposed person who resolved to do something for the comfort of the poor hopper. He put up a coffee-stall, in the hoppers' station, and furnished it splendidly with shining coffee-making machines, cups, saucers, mugs, buns, sandwiches—everything. The hoppers swooped down on that coffee-stall, and devoured and drank till no more was left to devour or drink. They needed no waiters; they went on the grand old plan of helping themselves, and they did help themselves. The soul of the benevolently disposed individual rejoiced exceedingly, but only for a while. Alas, that it should be so! For the hoppers were not content with helping themselves to the coffee and the cakes, the sandwiches and the buns, but they helped themselves also to the cups and the saucers, the knives and the forks and the spoons, and when nothing remained of these handy

A tale that is told.

and convenient souvenirs of the coffee-stall, they helped themselves to the coffee-making machines. The only thing they left to the benevolently disposed gentleman was the coffee-stall, and they would have taken that, only it was too big! Well, more in sorrow than in anger, the gentleman repeated his experiment—with exactly the same result. Like the man who was kicked by a mule twice in the same place, he got discouraged and left off trying. So runs the tale, and it's just possible there is some truth in it.



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